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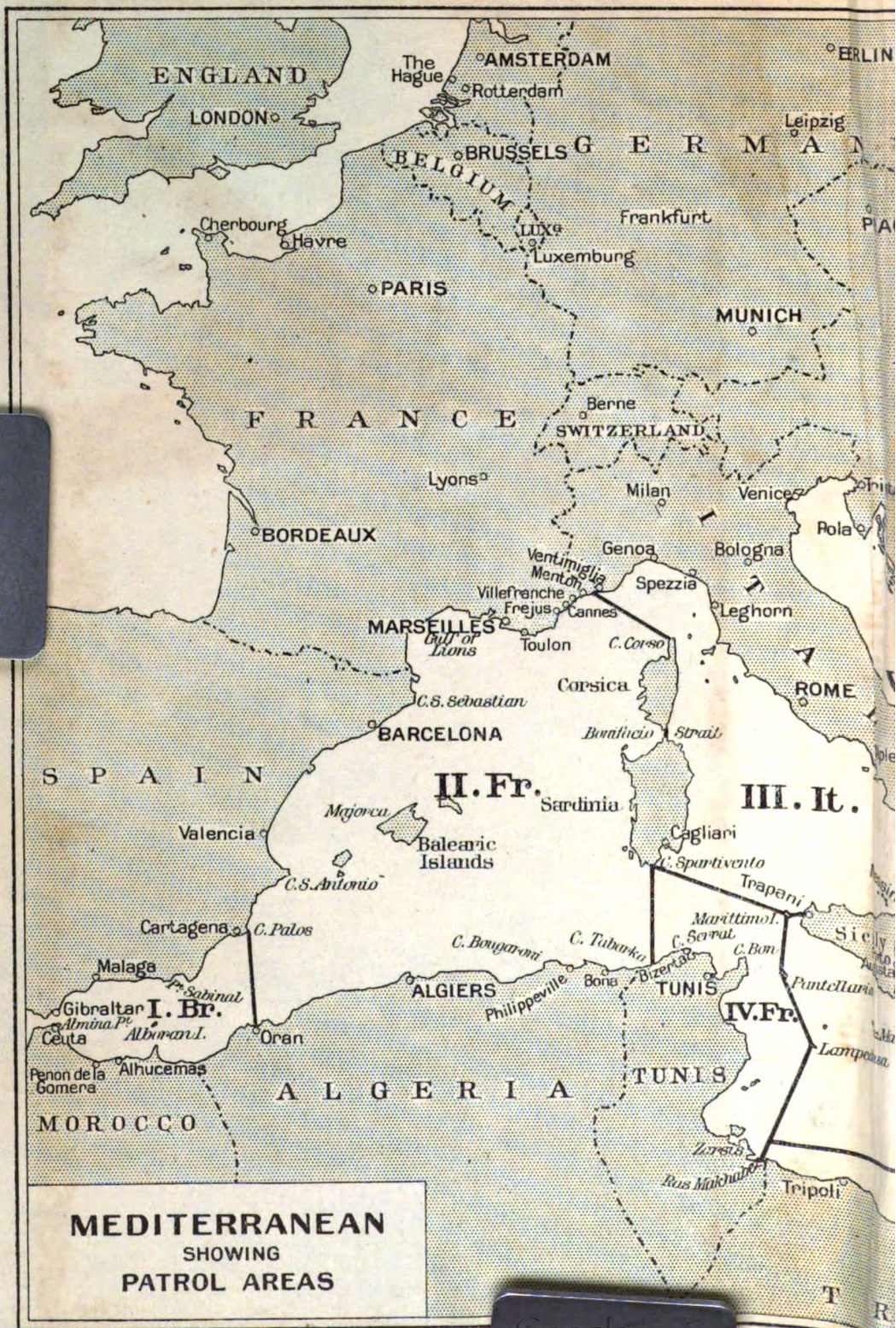
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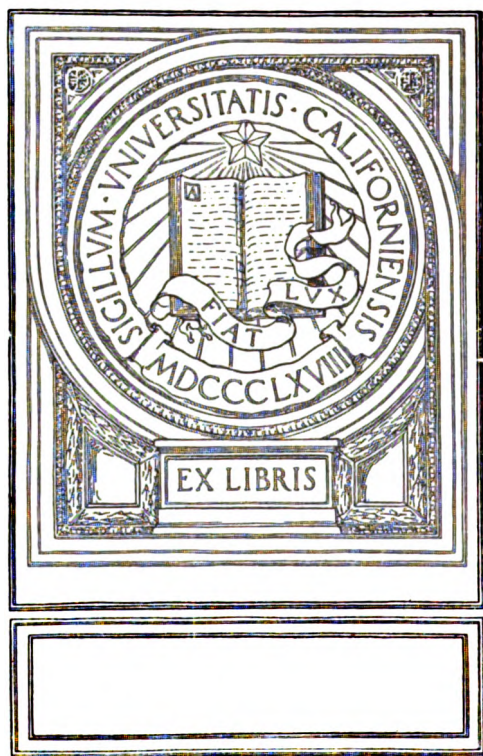


**MEDITERRANEAN**  
SHOWING  
PATROL AREAS









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## **SEAS OF ADVENTURES**



BOOKS ON THE SEA  
BY  
E. KEBLE CHATTERTON

SAILING SHIPS AND THEIR STORY  
SHIPS AND WAYS OF OTHER DAYS  
FORE AND AFT: THE STORY OF THE FORE AND AFT RIG  
THE STORY OF THE BRITISH NAVY  
KING'S CUTTERS AND SMUGGLERS  
STEAMSHIPS AND THEIR STORY  
THE ROMANCE OF THE SHIP  
THE ROMANCE OF PIRACY  
THE OLD EAST INDIAMEN  
Q-SHIPS AND THEIR STORY  
THE ROMANCE OF SEA ROVERS  
THE MERCANTILE MARINE  
THE AUXILIARY PATROL  
WHALERS AND WHALING  
CHATS ON NAVAL PRINTS  
THE SHIP UNDER SAIL  
BATTLES BY SEA  
SHIP MODELS  
STEAMSHIP MODELS  
SEAMEN ALL  
WINDJAMMERS AND SHELLBACKS  
THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE SEA  
CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH  
OLD SHIP PRINTS  
VENTURES AND VOYAGES  
OLD SEA PAINTINGS  
ON THE HIGH SEAS  
ENGLISH SEAMEN AND THE COLONISATION OF AMERICA  
THE SEA-RAIDERS  
GALLANT GENTLEMEN  
THE "KÖNIGSBERG" ADVENTURE  
THE BIG BLOCKADE  
THE YACHTSMAN'S PILOT  
SAILING MODELS  
DANGER ZONE  
AMAZING ADVENTURE  
DARDANELLES DILEMMA

*CRUISES*

DOWN CHANNEL IN THE *VIVETTE*  
THROUGH HOLLAND IN THE *VIVETTE*  
THROUGH BRITTANY IN *CHARMINA*  
TO THE MEDITERRANEAN IN *CHARMINA*

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA





ADMIRAL SIR SYDNEY FREMANTLE, G.C.B., M.V.O.  
With his Flag-Captain (Captain H. R. Veale, R.N.) aboard H.M.S. *Exmouth*

# SEAS OF ADVENTURES

*THE STORY OF THE NAVAL OPERATIONS IN  
THE MEDITERRANEAN, ADRIATIC, AND ÆGEAN*

*By*

**E. KEBLE CHATTERTON**

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UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE

*With 55 Illustrations and 4 Maps*



*Publishers  
since 1812*

**LONDON  
HURST & BLACKETT, LTD.**



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C43

THE VINYL  
RECORD  
*First published in 1936*

Made and Printed in Great Britain for  
Hurst & Blackett, Ltd., Paternoster House, London, E.C.4, at  
*The Mayflower Press, Plymouth.* William Brendon & Son, Ltd.

## PREFACE

**T**HIS is the story of the Naval Operations in the Mediterranean, Adriatic, and Aegean during the years 1914-1918. In a separate volume, *Dardanelles Dilemma*, I have already related the Gallipoli campaign as it concerned the sea service down to the evacuation of that tragic peninsula. The present volume is concerned not only with the subsequent problems which still remained to be solved off the Dardanelles Straits, but with that huge area extending from Gibraltar to the Syrian coast and from the northern Adriatic to the African littoral.

Throughout all ages that almost tideless Mediterranean, with its two great basins of the Aegean and Adriatic, has been the background for some of the finest stories on record. Over the same indigo waters the oared galleys of Greece and Rome, the mediæval carracks, the pilgrim vessels to Palestine, the wooden walls of Britain and France, the modern steel warships, have all come on their particular occasions. The foes of yesterday have become the allies of to-morrow, nations and dynasties have risen and fallen, vessels have modified all their characteristics save the ability to float and fight; yet the vast Latin lake has continued permanently to attract adventurers.

Never did these three seas yield such tense, ceaseless drama as during the four years which began with the escape of *Goeben* and *Breslau*. We are to watch the Allies struggling with the most disheartening difficulties, through all sorts of excitements and duels, overcoming every conceivable kind of perplexity, till victory arrived with remarkable suddenness and completeness. That which permeates this thrilling chronicle is the indomitable spirit manifested by all ranks and ratings from admiral to fisherman, from battleship to drifter, from mystery steamer to submarine. We shall behold the war fleets arriving not merely from England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, but from France, Russia, Australia, Japan, and the United States, united with the Italians against the Austrians, Germans, and Turks. This stupendous array of so many different ensigns has never been



rivalled in all history, and the quick succession of incidents during four long years ended only with that grand triumphant naval procession of the Allied Fleet through the Dardanelles to Constantinople. One can almost imagine the thousands of gallant soldiers rising from their Gallipoli graves, cheering the grey ships at last steaming past the blood-stained cliffs and beaches to that attainment so long desired, and for which so many lives had been willingly sacrificed.

Since those strenuous days a fresh generation has grown up, and it is especially for the new manhood that these true sea stories—more wonderful than all the world's fiction—have been written. I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude to the distinguished admirals, commanding officers, and others who have so generously assisted me to provide the reader with first-hand, authentic, accounts of the highest value. The latter have been obtained principally from the following sources: (1) Private journals and private letters written but a few hours after the events; (2) Considered statements set down later; (3) Appreciations of the changing situation at different stages; (4) Sketches and photographs made on the spot; (5) Correspondence and personal conversations with the author for the clearing up of obscure points or further confirmation. In all, some thousands of original documents have been studied, and the subject viewed from more than one angle.

I desire to acknowledge with all thanks the courtesy and valuable assistance of the following officers who have been good enough to place material and illustrations at my disposal: Admiral Sir Cecil Thursby, K.C.B., K.C.M.G.; Admiral Sir Sydney Fremantle, G.C.B., M.V.O.; Admiral A. Walker-Heneage-Vivian, C.B., M.V.O.; Vice-Admiral T. E. Wardle, C.B., D.S.O.; Rear-Admiral C. E. Turle, D.S.O.; Captain C. G. Chichester, D.S.O., R.N.; Captain C. J. Crocker, D.S.O., R.N.; Captain E. L. B. Lockyer, D.S.O., R.N.; Commander M. E. Cochrane, D.S.O., R.N.; Commander N. A. G. Ohlenschlager, D.S.O., R.N.; Commander A. M. Roberts, D.S.O., R.N.; Major K. S. Savory, D.S.O.; and Lieutenant A. H. Ramsden-Tagore, R.N.V.R. I have occasionally consulted the Official Naval History and *The German Submarine War*, by R. H. Gibson and Maurice Prendergast.

I hope that, apart from the interest evoked by these narrations, there will thus be preserved a permanent record for future contemplation on the part of naval students. Seeing the Mediter-

anean problem as a whole, and how nearly we allowed the enemy to win, we may perceive those serious mistakes which must never be allowed to repeat themselves in any future campaign. The value of history is that it elucidates facts, demonstrates briefly the results bound to happen from certain causes. Ships and tactics may change from century to century out of all recognition ; but principles and naval strategy remain independent of time.

E. KEBLE CHATTERTON.





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# SEAS OF ADVENTURES

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

**B**EFORE plunging into the adventures, let us first glance at the environment for all these incidents:

Utterly different from the Narrow Seas of the English and Irish Channels, and that shallow, chill expanse stretching across to Germany, is the Middle Sea, with its two bold arms of the Adriatic and Aegean. In particular the Latin Lake, landlocked though it may be, has ample spaciousness, immense depths, greater warmth, and far longer periods of extreme visibility. Nor did these considerations fail to have the most powerful influence on the naval campaign, but especially when submarines came down from the north.

Measuring at its extremes, the Mediterranean has a length of some 2400 miles, and more than half that at its maximum breadth. Into this vast area such noble rivers as the Rhône and Nile empty themselves, yet whilst there are local currents past certain headlands and through straits, the tides are scarcely noticeable. Whereas a rise of 15 feet in an English port is not abnormal, whilst at Guernsey spring tides rise over 26 feet, and at St. Malo even to 40 feet; along the Mediterranean littoral 9 inches will be found normally the highest and 3 feet quite exceptional. So, too, instead of a sandy shoaled region necessitating the employment of lightships and a system of buoys miles from the land, we have in south Europe an average depth of 5000 feet, and even three times this profundity between Malta and Crete. Long passages are made without obstructions.

The exceptional salinity and buoyancy of the Mediterranean affect not merely submersibles but surface ships: it is well known, for instance, that the speed trials made by a destroyer in the Toulon district afford data different from those obtained in the Brest area—quite apart from any consideration of tidal streams or currents. But most notable are those long dry sunny

periods and high temperatures when seafaring differs so fundamentally from life in the cold, boisterous North Sea. In war time, when men were compelled to keep their stations afloat for weeks at a time without seeking harbour, this superiority of environment meant a great deal to human optimism and endurance. Of course, it is not always fine weather, and even in summer that treacherous Gulf of Lions, with its three, six, and sometimes nine days' *mistrals* ; or the not less tricky Genoa Gulf, with its sudden *tramontana* ; or the Adriatic with its notorious *bora* ; and the Aegean, where the wind without warning flies round from north to south, often rendering an island anchorage so insecure that ships must weigh in the night and clear out ; these and other localities have to be known and treated with seamanlike regard.

In the ancient days when the Greeks and Romans relied so much on oars and galleys ; likewise during the Middle Ages when slaves or criminals could cheaply be found for toiling at the oars ; all those islands of the Aegean and Adriatic with their bays and creeks afforded natural harbours where the light craft could creep into shelter or at the worst be hauled up on the beach. But now that ships are heavy with engines and can claw off a lee shore, sea venturing has altered, bigger risks can be taken, and natural protection can be used for a totally different purpose. For example, that wonderful chain of islands off the Dalmatian coast, extending most of the way from the Istrian peninsula almost to Cattaro, was employed during the war as a screen for the Austrian Fleet when moving south in fear of torpedoes.

But whilst the main traffic route between Gibraltar Straits and Port Said, or from Port Said to Marseilles, for the most part consists of open water, there are stages where ships must pass through more confined districts, and thus the enemy could lie in wait to ambush. That was why the neighbourhood of Sicily, the western side of Crete, the waters washing Corsica and Sardinia, the bottle-neck between southern Spain and Oran, were to become such happy hunting-grounds for the only German hostile craft that were free to use the Mediterranean. These shipping lanes were sure to yield weekly and daily opportunities, for the reason that steamers must pass this way from the Suez Canal.

Additional, however, to these main roads was that special war-time way which led round the south of Greece through the Aegean archipelago. It is the primary duty of a Navy to become mistress of the sea in order that the Army may be landed safely

and that the latter's supplies may be carried uninterruptedly throughout the months. Now from the moment when the Dardanelles undertaking developed into a military venture and battalions of soldiers with their guns and impedimenta, their food and ammunition supplies, their reinforcements and hospital-ships, had to be brought across the Middle Sea into the Gallipoli circuit, there was inaugurated simultaneously a fresh opportunity for the enemy and a corresponding anxiety for the Navy. In spite of all the lurking-places at the back of Aegean islands, and useful Turkish bays along the Asia Minor coast, whence submarines could dart with their torpedoes, this long sea-road must be kept as safe as naval vessels could make it. In practice it was an impossible task to maintain an adequate patrol against submarines all the distance from Gallipoli to Gibraltar, but the problem became still more complicated when the Salonika commitment demanded troops by the hundreds of thousands, and the steamers for transport or supplies stretched out into one long line of easy targets. When once out in the open Mediterranean, or wide Atlantic, their chances were much more secure, but it was just the inevitable nodal points, the obstructions which here and there had to be rounded, that most naturally attracted the enemy's attention.

For the Allies, operating defensively over the million square miles of the Mediterranean, it was a most serious business. First of all the initiative belonged to the Central Powers ; secondly, the contest having soon settled down to a war between small craft, a severe drain was made on the destroyers, sloops, trawlers, drifters and so on, that were so badly needed round the British Isles. This scattering of forces, and essential action over too many miles, could in the aggregate only weaken rather than strengthen our chances of victory. The submarines were dictating our policy, and directing the disposition of our patrols. But, finally, it could not be expected that Great Britain might find in the Middle Sea that impersonal and unselfish disinterestedness on the part of allies whose very shores were in the Mediterranean peril. To say that France and Italy would pool all their resources with us in the common aim of defeating the enemy was an ideal ; but when this ideal had to be tested in daily routine, it worked imperfectly. The French had one theory, the Italians another, and the British yet a third.

To be precise, whilst the French remembered their interest in North Africa and Syria, and the Italians could not afford to

endanger their Navy unduly against the Austrians, neither national Navy could quite merge itself into one complete unity with the British. If the Italians were most parochial in their outlook, and local in their operations, how much more delicacy and tact were needed when Japanese and American naval forces were sent to collaborate with us in the Mediterranean! The truth is that dispersion of effort from beginning to end did have a hampering effect on the whole. Unity of purpose, singleness of intention, were never quite achieved because there was no flag-officer in supreme command to deal with the Mediterranean and handle its problems centrally. After the Gallipoli evacuation there should have been appointed to the Middle Sea an Admiralissimo in charge of the routeing of shipping and anti-submarine arrangements, with power to dispose all the naval forces between Gibraltar and Palestine. Whilst thereby much wastage would have been avoided, various conferences rendered unnecessary, all clashing of interests in the various zones made unthinkable, much of the spectacular side would have never occurred, and these chapters would have lost their excitement.

Let us, then, with this introduction, proceed to follow the strange situations, the thrilling incidents, which developed primarily because two German ships had escaped to Constantinople. The Dardanelles campaign having been treated separately in my *Dardanelles Dilemma*, need not be discussed again in detail. It came and went, it was a blinding flash, a startling explosion; yet when the last officer and man had left Gallipoli the Mediterranean dilemma was only just waxing formidable. The *Goeben* was still beyond the Sea of Marmara and keeping us in a perpetual state of suspense till the end of hostilities; but whether she and the Austrian Fleet would break forth to unite in some daring escapade and create disaster to some of our remote forces, mattered not more than whether we could much longer tolerate merchant steamers being allowed to take their chances through the Mediterranean gauntlet.

It is this uncertainty, this wonder at what will happen next, that make the following sea adventures so entertaining for the general reader and so illuminating for the student of naval history. We are able with all the facts now before us to view the struggle as one multi-coloured whole, and not as a series of detached episodes.





GEOGRAPHIA L<sup>re</sup>

## CHAPTER II

### UP THE ADRIATIC

**I**T is at the outset more than worth while to note those incidents of August 1914 which were to determine the lines of conflict during the next four Mediterranean years. What were the actual premises from which the conclusion was to follow? How came it that the marine struggle developed this way, and not that?

On the first day of that month Germany declared war against Russia and two days later against France: on the fourth day Great Britain was at enmity with Germany. In the meanwhile, however, those two fast cruisers, *Goeben* and *Breslau*, began a leitmotif which continued to be heard week after week till the soothing melody of peace floated across the troubled waters into ears that were tired with listening for sudden bangings.

Briefly narrated, both *Goeben* and *Breslau* having completed a call at Messina, left there on August 3, steaming westward to bombard the north African French ports of Philippeville and Bona on the following morning. This exploit of frightfulness being effected, the ships returned to Messina, coaled, and left again on the evening of August 6. In spite of obstacles they succeeded four nights later in entering the Dardanelles, whence they never came out till the year 1918; for the exit was denied them by the institution of a blockade, which in turn was to be transformed presently into a naval and military campaign.

Now on August 6 an Anglo-French convention, held in London, definitely indicated the political spirit which would characterise future events; for it was agreed that the French navy should be responsible throughout the Middle Sea for the protection of both Britain's and France's commerce; for the safeguarding of the approaches alike to the Gibraltar Straits and Suez Canal; for any operations against enemy auxiliary cruisers along this area; but, especially, was the French fleet to act against the naval forces of Austria—should Austria-Hungary become a foe—and prevent the latter's fleet from coming out of the Adriatic. The next trend was thus clearly demonstrated when on August 10

France announced herself as at war against Austria, and two days later Great Britain made a similar declaration. When H.M.S. *Inflexible*, flagship of Admiral Sir Berkeley Milne, finally left Malta for Plymouth, the Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean was no longer British but Vice-Admiral Boué de Lapeyrère, with his flag in the Dreadnought battleship *Courbet*.

Such, then, was the quickly created situation that should influence all which came later. Strictly speaking, this French supremacy of leadership and control suffered modifications in actuality, and the Dardanelles operations under British flag-officers became a somewhat free sphere of action. But Malta had been placed at the French Admiral's disposal and his fleet, in part, had assembled there by August 13.

Whilst our own efforts during the initial days of this memorable month were concentrated against the two German cruisers, the French fleet had been primarily concerned with the safe transport of their troops from Algeria to such ports as Cette and Marseilles; the sending of warships to the north African coast for the purpose of calming minds that had been made uneasy by the Philippeville and Bona bombardments. Later, also, French cruisers patrolled between Cape Bon and western Sicily; between Barcelona and the Balearic Isles, for the purpose of watching obvious channels. In like manner was a patrol instituted between northern Corsica and the Franco-Italian frontier beyond Menton. For, as yet, Italy had not shown her hand, and no one could foresee whether she would give up her neutrality or whether she might throw in her lot with Germany and Austria. During the intermediate period, however, contraband cargoes and a number of enemy subjects were captured aboard neutral ships, but principally in those which happened to be Italian owned.

Whilst Rear-Admiral Darrieus continued to guard the Marseilles-Algeria transport route, Admiral de Lapeyrère could devote his personal attention to negative the Austrian fleet. By the middle of August the French Commander-in-Chief reached the Adriatic from Malta and effected a rendezvous with Rear-Admiral Troubridge commanding the British First Cruiser Squadron. A sweep was made up this sea, which resulted in the Austrian cruiser *Zenta* (an old vessel of 2264 tons, built in 1899) being shelled into destruction; after which Admiral Troubridge was ordered for a while to the Dardanelles, whilst H.M.S. *Warrior*, *Dublin*, and *Weymouth* remained behind under de Lapeyrère.

That which now crystallised had its counterpart in the North

Sea. Just as the Grand Fleet, in fact (though not in name), inaugurated a blockade against the Germans, so the Allied Fleet in the Adriatic began a blockade against the Austrians. At a time when the only two German Mediterranean warships were being blockaded off the Dardanelles by the British ; and there was little fear that either *Emden* or *Königsberg* would come north ; also, bearing in mind that German as well as Austrian merchant steamers interned at various neutral ports would have to wait leisurely till such time as the Central Powers could conquer on land ; the question of mastery over the Mediterranean sea-routes no longer remained in suspense. Thus was it possible for the huge convoy of British troops from India to be brought across from the Suez Canal, and their naval escort could be regarded as a measure of precaution rather than a pure necessity.

But scarcely had the French settled down to their Adriatic blockade than they were to experience something of the modern peril to an ancient undertaking. In the North Sea our warships had already learned, both suddenly and with pain, that the much despised submarine was going to be a deadly threat. Such torpedoings as of H.M.S. *Pathfinder* and the three *Cressys* had created unpleasant sensations ; but not till October 17 up the Adriatic did submarine warfare concern the Middle Sea when the French armoured cruiser *Waldeck Rousseau* (13,780 tons) was attacked by an Austrian submarine off Cattaro. Luckily the cruiser escaped, yet the hint of what risks must nowadays be expected by blockaders could not be denied.

The stretch of coast that still belonged to Austria-Hungary extending from the Istrian peninsula south-eastwards on one side of the Adriatic, is generally high with perpendicular cliffs and very deep water right in to the shore. Especially to be noted are its ragged features of innumerable islands and bays against a mountainous background. At Trieste, Fiume, and Pola were important shipbuilding yards, whilst lower down on the Dalmatian coast was that beautiful and spacious inlet of Cattaro, which was destined to play no inconspicuous part during the war years. For our enemies it had the advantages of providing excellent anchorage with deep water. Even for a large fleet there are few havens its superior in all the Mediterranean. The three natural basins within, by their zig-zag interconnection, might have been specially designed against attack from seawards. Surrounded by high land from all weathers except local squalls, and affected by little current except after heavy rains





have poured down from the mountain-sides, Cattaro could easily be defended by nets at its entrance, whereas the depth of 160 feet immediately at the mouth (quickly increasing when only slightly away from the land) made it difficult for hostile visitors desirous of laying mines. Thus, both from this consideration, its twists and sharp turns which would defeat direct attack by torpedoes or shells, no more satisfactory security could be desired as an advanced base opposite the Italian Brindisi, and well situated in proximity to the Otranto Straits. One might describe Cattaro as the ideal "funk-hole" from which raids could be made and into which retreating ships could dash back with confidence.

As one proceeds still further down this east Adriatic coast, the indentations and natural harbours, the scattered islands and debouching rivers arouse unusual interest. Not to weary the reader, it will suffice if attention is called to those particular items which must be the scenes of notable events during our narration. At San Giovanni di Medua this rocky coast affords a harbour sheltered from all winds and with three piers, but the town consists of only a few houses, is unhealthy during the summer, and few provisions can be obtained. During the time of hostilities the reader may well appreciate that its dangerously short distance from Cattaro made it no suitable port of embarkation for a fatigued Serbian army.

Further south comes Durazzo, with its stone pier and distant anchorage for moderate-sized steamers (less than 24 feet in draught) but a thousand yards away from the pier. Thus embarkation would demand ferrying from shore in light craft. Further drawbacks are that a considerable sea is sent in by westerly and south-westerly winds, whilst malaria ashore is a menace to any Europeans compelled to make the halt which the saddened Serbians would have to endure.

On the other hand, Valona Bay, with its ample depths for even the biggest battleships, and splendid spaciousness of 9 miles length, needed only adequate netting to make it a secure anchorage for the Allies. Its entrance at Cape Linguetta being within reasonable steaming distance of the Italian coast, was to give Valona additional attraction as we shall later observe. Finally, at Corfu, that Greek island which has been justly called the key of the Adriatic, were to be found both natural and strategic facilities that would be welcomed by a blockading fleet, provided certain preliminary defences had been taken against surprise by torpedoes.

Now in the year just before hostilities broke out the Austro-Hungarian Government had committed themselves to vast millions of expense for new warship construction ; the defences of Pola ; but especially for the creation of new battleships. This programme was by no means completed when the great European War burst forth, but already she possessed three first-class battleships of the *Viribus Unitis* class (20,000 tons, 20 knots, and twelve 12-inch guns), besides half a dozen other capital ships (10,433 to 14,268 tons, 20 knots, and four guns of either 9·4 inch or 12 inch). Besides eight (including the previously mentioned *Zenta*) small light cruisers already becoming obsolete, she had the four modern light cruisers, *Admiral Spaun*, *Saida*, *Helgoland*, and *Novara*. These were very useful vessels of 3500 tons, with an excellent speed of 27 knots, armed with either seven or nine 3·9-inch guns, having been built at Trieste or Fiume. We shall do well to bear these in mind as they were to make some dramatic appearances.

In small craft the Austrians could number some modern 30-knot destroyers and at least sixty efficient torpedo-boats, but our present concern is chiefly with the submarines. To prevent any confusion it will be convenient in this volume always to speak of Austrian submarines by Roman numerals prefixed with the letter U, whilst German submarines will have the letter U followed by Arabic numbers. Thus August 1914 found Austria with three small types of the following characteristics: U-I and II had a displacement (on the surface) of only 216 tons, and were armed with three torpedo tubes ; U-III and IV were of 237 tons, but had two tubes ; U-V and VI were of 235 tons, with two tubes. The first pair of boats were built at Pola, the second in Germany at Kiel, and the third at Fiume some six years previously ; their surface speeds being about 12 knots, but about 8 knots underwater.

It was a little unfortunate for the Austrians that in February 1913 they had placed an order with Krupps at Kiel to build five more that were to be numbered U-VII to XI: for, when the war clouds gathered, Germany promptly took these over for her own service and designated them U-66 to 70. The well-known torpedo firm of Whitehead & Co. at Fiume (who alone in the Dual Monarchy would have been able to construct such special craft) had tendered for the contract yet had not been accepted. But Whiteheads happened privately to own a small submarine for their own uses, so she was appropriated and became U-XII.

This unit deserves special mention, since she made history as the first submarine which ever torpedoed warship or merchantman within the Adriatic or Mediterranean, though on December 13, 1914, Lieutenant N. D. Holbrook with B-11 torpedoed the Turkish battleship *Messudieh* up the Dardanelles.

Somehow, neither this last lesson nor the sinking of our own *Pathfinder* and the *Cressys* seems to have impressed the French sufficiently: they had still to learn that speed is the greatest anti-submarine protection, that economy in fuel may spell disaster. The *Waldeck Rousseau* escape had been accepted too lightly. Thus on December 21, 1914, when the 23,000 tons Dreadnought *Jean Bart* was steaming through the Otranto Straits without a destroyer screen, she suffered the penalty. " *Pour économiser leur charbon*," it was no unusual procedure for the French patrols to be moving at 7 knots: actually the *Jean Bart* was doing 9 knots. U-XII had no difficulty in hitting her, and by all the rules of chance this should have ended fatally. But it so happened that the missile found its target right forward instead of amidships, so the battleship with her gaping wound managed to crawl into Malta, where she was dry-docked and spent valuable weeks before again becoming seaworthy. For those British vessels which in the spring of 1915 called at Malta on their way to the Dardanelles, this unpleasant sight caused lasting recollections. How fortunate *Jean Bart* had been was proved eleven days afterwards when the British battleship *Formidable*, whilst steaming at a higher speed, was torpedoed in the English Channel and sent to the bottom with heavy loss of life.

The result of these two French incidents was that battleships were at last considered too valuable for the actual work of carrying out blockading where submarines could operate. The former must therefore shelter themselves in the security of Malta harbour until, and if, some defended area could be found within the Adriatic sphere. In the meanwhile the active duties of enforcing such blockade would be entrusted to the French cruisers, destroyers, and submarines. If this were not an ideal arrangement, it was in such circumstances the most prudent. Our ally could hardly be accused of lacking enterprise and *élan* where opportunities seemed to exist; and a great desire was aflame to enter the Austrian bases, there to smite a blow after the manner of U-XII. In November the French submarine *Cugnot* pluckily essayed to enter Cattaro, but got caught in the defence nets and with difficulty escaped out of a perilous position. During the next

month the French submarine *Curie* penetrated into Pola to attack Austrian men-of-war, but here again the nets were too formidable and in spite of her best efforts she was caught like a fly in a spider's web. At last she rose to the surface, her people surrendered themselves, though the boat was scuttled.<sup>1</sup> Later on, however, the Austrians got her up, gave her a refit, in March 1915 commissioned her for their own service as U-XIV, and so she continued till the end of the war, when she was restored to the French. The loss for our friends during the intervening years could not be regarded as anything than unfortunate. This able modern craft of 554 (surface) tons had been completed at Toulon only the previous year. Her 1200 miles radius of action, twin Diesels, and eight torpedoes came as a welcome surprise gift for a nation already deprived of the five that should have come from Kiel.

Nor was that the end of a sad business. As you walk through the thronged streets of Toulon you may notice a memorial to the French Admiral Sénès, who lost his life with many of his shipmates under the following circumstances. The Adriatic winter had passed without further excitements since the *Jean Bart* and *Curie* incidents. Spring had come over land and sea, and the French cruisers were still maintaining their vigil in the Otranto Straits. The night of April 26-27 was brilliant with the moon's rays, lighting up three patrols, among which was the 12,351 tons armoured cruiser *Leon Gambetta*, that had eased down and lowered a boat in order to examine one of those sailing vessels which still passed through these straits. The heavy cruiser was now doing about 6½ knots, and without destroyer screen: in fact almost soliciting attack. Emboldened by their success against *Jean Bart*, Austrian submarines had made a habit of creeping thus far down the coast, and it happened that to-night U-V (built by the Whitehead firm and sister to U-XII) was on duty. She carried but four torpedoes, which had to be fired bows on, but only two were required for such an easy target. The ship never had a chance, and foundered with the loss of Admiral Sénès besides about 600 men. Again this was a further victory for underwater craft, since it now compelled the withdrawal of armoured cruisers from the blockading fleet, thus weakening pressure against Austria still more seriously.

Could the work be carried out firmly enough by light cruisers and destroyers?

<sup>1</sup> See also Chapter XVI.



## CHAPTER III

### THE BRINDISI BASE

NOW had we reached the important stage of the war when several determining influences began almost simultaneously. On April 25 the historic landing of troops at Gallipoli had coincided with the departure from Germany of Lieutenant-Commander Hersing in U-21, bound first for Cattaro, whence he was to operate off the Dardanelles and cause such sensational sinkings of British battleships. It was on May 13 that she reached Cattaro<sup>1</sup> from Wilhelmshaven, but had to visit Pola for repairs ere she set out a week later for the Aegean. The arrival of this exceptionally able officer was to introduce an entirely new condition: hitherto no enemy submarine had torpedoed a merchantman in the Mediterranean, Adriatic or the Aegean. Whilst Hersing's mission was intended primarily against big warships, the latter (having for the most part been driven inside netted harbours soon after the loss of H.M.S. *Triumph* and *Majestic*) became so rarely seen at sea that U-21 must needs seek allied merchant steamers for targets. And a few weeks after U-21 there arrived other submarines, which had the dual effect of making Cattaro a still more notable base and the Otranto Straits less safe than ever. Let it be stressed likewise that with the advent of these bigger boats—U-21 displacing 840 tons with a surface speed of 15 knots, her armament comprising eight torpedoes and two guns—the mastery of the Mediterranean at once became disputed. No longer could the Allies claim that the shipping routes were safe.

But on April 26 a further complication had occurred when Italy decided to enter the hostilities on the Allies' side, and to declare war against Austria within a month. If this resolve (as it turned out) was to be less beneficial for the Anglo-French cause than might have been hoped, at least it would mean that one side of the Adriatic would be friendly and the Otranto defile rendered no easier to the enemy. Whilst most of Italy's harbours

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of this pioneer voyage to the Mediterranean see Chapter XXII of my *Dardanelles Dilemma*.

are on her west coasts, both Taranto and Brindisi were good naval bases and likely to be useful for operations against Austria. In material strength Italy could boast of not less than five Dreadnoughts and five smaller battleships, seven armoured cruisers, including the *Pisa*, *Amalfi*, *San Giorgio*, and *San Marco* (each of about 10,000 tons and over 22 knots speed); several modern light cruisers, besides numerous destroyers, torpedo-boats, and submarines. On paper this seemed a very acceptable force, especially if combined with the French Adriatic Fleet; but it is false reckoning to sum up naval strength merely by *materiel* and to omit the personal factor.

To begin with, the Italians could never see eye to eye with the French; were desirous of preserving a certain independence of spirit, and not taking many risks, whilst simultaneously being glad to have reinforcement. After much discussion and delicate effort on the part of Great Britain a naval convention was signed at Paris on May 10, producing unity of purpose rather than uniformity of mind. The agreement included adding four British battleships and four British light cruisers to the Italian forces as soon as the French had replaced these with an equal number of cruisers at the Dardanelles: the French were also to aid the Italians with a dozen destroyers and other craft. So on May 23, 1915, the formal declaration of war was presented at Vienna by the Italian Ambassador. It is, however, to be noted that not yet was Italy at war with Germany, or Turkey.

On the day following this severance of diplomatic relations with Austria the wireless operators aboard *Goeben* at Constantinople were listening-in on wave-lengths of 300 to 400 metres, day and night, for Hersing's arrival off the Dardanelles, and one of the most dramatic moments in even that adventurous ship began when a faint, high-pitched note reached her from U-21 the day after H.M.S. *Triumph* went to the bottom. But other underwater craft were to come from the Adriatic. The reader will remember that at outbreak of war Germany had deprived Austria of five submarines ordered from Kiel. By the spring of 1915 the former began to repay more than this debt out of thirty-two small units that Admiral von Tirpitz caused to be laid down during the first autumn. Thus were the following despatched by rail in sections from Kiel and Bremen to be assembled and launched at Pola: UB-1, 3, 7, 8, 14, 15; and UC-12, 13, 14, and 15. The first six were small coastal boats, measuring 90 feet long, 10 feet beam, and drawing just under 10 feet of water on the surface.

They had single hulls, and were quite slow, their best speed being about 8 knots on the surface, but 5 knots when submerged. A couple of torpedoes were carried. The UC boats were 111 feet long, 10 feet beam, and drew 9 feet. Their surface speed was not more than  $7\frac{1}{2}$  knots, their electric batteries enabled them to do 5 knots submerged, and they carried a cargo of a dozen mines. Naturally such little craft were most difficult to see even when on the surface, and the Mediterranean custom of sometimes painting submarines blue made them still less visible.

Of these ten imported from Germany all save UB-3 were in September still afloat. The latter, together with UB-7 and UB-8, were sent under their own power through the Adriatic and up the Aegean, probably during the first week of April of 1915. UB-3 has never been heard of since she made her last wireless report when 80 miles off Smyrna, and it is practically certain that during April 9 she blew up on Turkish mines laid in the Smyrna Gulf. The other two, bringing cargoes of munitions to the Turks, reached Constantinople and later were sent to the Black Sea working from Varna against the Russians. UC-13, 14, and 15 all made trips with arms and ammunition this same summer from the Adriatic to Constantinople, but in the autumn UB-7 ended her career on a Black Sea mine.

Thus, with Austro-German co-operation there had been firmly established in the Mediterranean a submarine campaign some time before Italy became a belligerent, which was an additional reason why she appeared reluctant to risk her fleet. Already on May 6 the Austrians had shown some surface enterprise when their light cruiser *Admiral Spaun* got well down below the Otranto Straits to a distance of 80 miles south of Cape Santa Maria di Leuca (heel of Italy). Although chased by the French cruiser *Jules Ferry* (12,351 tons) and the French destroyer *Bisson*, the Austrian's 26 knots enabled her to escape. It was this incident which showed the desirability of lending two British fast light cruisers for Adriatic operations.

Nor did the enemy waste much time in making reply to Italy's war declaration, for on May 24 some Austrian cruisers and destroyers crossed the sea and bombarded the three ports Corsini, Ancona, and Barletta of the Italian east coast. It was one of those raids which inflict only material damage without making strategical victory, the net result being that at Porto Corsini the enemy suffered some harm from a masked battery's fire, and an old Italian destroyer *Turbine* of about 320 tons was sunk by the

Austrian flotilla. On the same day the Italian destroyer *Zeffiro* belonging to the same class raided Porto Buso, a small Austrian harbour just over the frontier in the Gulf of Trieste.

And next we come to watch the assistance which, in accordance with the Naval Convention, British ships were to render our newest ally. From the Dardanelles this month were detailed the four light cruisers *Dartmouth*, *Dublin*, *Amethyst* and *Sapphire*; the battleships *Queen*, *Implacable*, *London*, and *Prince of Wales*, which all reached Malta by May 22, being under the command of Rear-Admiral Cecil F. Thursby. After docking and making good some defects, loading ammunition and stores, they were soon ready for their fresh duties, so that *Dartmouth* and *Dublin* (5250 and 5400 tons respectively, with their 25 knots speed<sup>1</sup>), being so much desired at the Adriatic, went on ahead, reaching Brindisi by May 25. Two days later at Taranto, escorted on the way by eight French destroyers, arrived Admiral Thursby with his four battleships.

That same evening came into Taranto from Malta Vice-Admiral de Lapeyrère, so that it was possible for the French Commander-in-Chief; the Italian Commander-in-Chief, H.R.H. the Duke of the Abruzzi (under whom the British Admiral now began to serve); and the latter, to confer as to future arrangements. It was decided that the Italian Fleet should undertake patrol of the Otranto Straits (across which we were particularly anxious that nets should be laid against submarines) and be responsible for the whole Adriatic, whilst the French battle fleet was to work independently but to be placed in such a strategic position as would cover Vice-Admiral de Robeck's Eastern Mediterranean Squadron—in other words prevent the Austrians from making a dash into the Aegean. Furthermore, the French cruisers and destroyers were to protect transports passing through the Mediterranean and attack enemy submarines already in that area. These matters having been satisfactorily settled, the French Commander-in-Chief again put to sea. His battle fleet, his armoured cruisers, and the two divisions of his light cruisers were stationed principally within Malta and Bizerta, so that *L'Armée Navale Française* became actually a reserve force, if we omit a few units. What with the Dardanelles area under the British Admiral de Robeck, Egyptian naval affairs under the British Admiral Peirse, and the Adriatic under the Duke of the Abruzzi,

<sup>1</sup> Owing to a recent explosion *Dartmouth's* speed for the present was reduced to 21 knots.

the French Admiral had by no means complete command of the Mediterranean. The submarine menace had driven the French into a position where their strength could not immediately be felt. Any likely danger must come from the north-east, and de Lapeyrère could not feel satisfied when realising that Malta lies 400 miles from the Otranto Straits and Bizerta about 250 miles further still. He would have preferred the base at Taranto, but there was no room for his and the Italian Fleet. Similarly Porto Augusta, at the south-east corner of Sicily, interested him as a fairly good situation, but it was exposed to torpedo attack and the necessary protective nets were wanting. On the Greek side of the Adriatic there was choice of several excellent roadsteads which would have served splendidly, enabling his force to be concentrated and in a perfect strategic position ; but at present Greece was still neutral.

Thus, in a word, however desirable among allies is "unity of front," this condition was far from existing in the Middle Sea, and ensuing months tended rather to splitting up the general sphere into a quite surprising number of petty fleets under junior admirals or senior captains. Each geographical section settled down to carry on its own war in its own way—the problem at Malta differed from that in the western Mediterranean, or in the Otranto Straits, just as the Mudros dilemma was dissimilar to that in the Gulf of Salonika, and neither resembled the anxieties around the Suez Canal. It may be argued that such is the vastness of the Latin Lake, and so varied were the local characteristics in war time, that unity of command was an impracticable ideal, and decentralisation the only logical method. This is a matter carefully to be weighed, but in the opinion of many naval officers who served there afloat decentralisation had amongst its virtues certain fundamental defects that became all too evident as the submarine campaign intensified.

Not even those allied naval conferences, which so interrupted the routine of busy admirals and caused them to make long journeys away from their allotted localities, could overcome the weakness. This led to discussion, to the impossible aim of satisfying opinions which clashed, and the only way out was found in a compromise which did not meet the case adequately. A naval dictatorship rather than a council would have served the purpose far better.

So let us begin with the special Adriatic problem and follow its extremely interesting and even exciting phases. Taranto

harbour is well fortified both naturally and artificially, the fleet anchorage being within a kind of inland lake reached through a narrow passage. As the four British battleships passed through the Mare Grande into the Mare Piccolo, where rode the Italian Fleet, a loud welcome rose from the people on their balconies, clapping their hands and shouting "Viva l'Inghilterra." The entire battle fleet here assembled by our new friends comprised the four Dreadnoughts *Conte di Cavour* (flying the Duke's flag), *Leonardo di Vinci*, *Dante Alighieri*, and *Giulio Cesare*, all of which had been completed within the last two years; the four older battleships *Regina Elena*, *Vittorio Emanuele*, *Napoli*, and *Roma*; with the four armoured cruisers *Pisa*, *Amalfi*, *San Giorgio*, and *San Marco*.

That which specially impressed our officers in going aboard was the cleanliness of these ships. Of course the latter had not just come through the Dardanelles strenuousness with months of continuous coaling and preparedness for action, but Italians seemed to believe that sea fighting could be undertaken just as well with comfortable arm-chairs still retained, the wardroom brilliant with gleaming silver and glass instead of denuding it of luxuries. Unfortunately, there was something lacking with regard to communications. At midnight of the second day an airship suddenly appeared near the harbour, whereupon H.M.S. *Implacable* opened fire with her anti-aircraft gun. Fortunately the Italian in the sky received no damage, but she had shown no recognition signals.

Whilst the four British battleships were based on Taranto our light cruisers, in company with the Italian and French destroyers—all from Brindisi—began patrolling, carrying out demonstrations against the Austrian signal stations, attacking the Dalmatian harbours of Sebenico, Spalato, Ragusa, and off-lying islands. On the last day of May an Italian destroyer flotilla bombarded the docks of Monfalcone (in the Trieste Gulf), and on June 9 this town was captured by a combined naval and military offensive. On the other hand, it could not be expected that the enemy would remain inactive, and from now we are to see the weaknesses of modern defence.

So many appearances of Austrian submarines were made up to this week that at least seven boats had been noted, though the Allies had suffered no sinkings. The proximity of Brindisi's base to the Dalmatian coast, however, and the consequent possibility of reprisals received a sharp emphasis on June 1, when enemy

aircraft tried to drop bombs over the warships in this harbour. One of the pilots was wounded by rifle fire from the British cruiser *Amethyst*, and his derelict aeroplane picked up at sea by H.M.S. *Dublin*. The latter a few days afterwards found herself in a serious situation.

It was in the evening of June 8 that she left Brindisi with three French and four Italian destroyers, a zigzag course being steered at 15 knots towards the Albanian coast, off which she made a rendezvous at 2.30 a.m. with the Italian Rear-Admiral Millo in the light cruiser *Nino Bixio*, who had with him six destroyers. A reconnaissance was then made by the Italian destroyers at S. Giovanni di Medua, who, having effected their mission, rejoined at 7 a.m. and the expedition set a course for Brindisi. In order to look out for submarines, Captain John D. Kelly had stationed his French destroyers ahead, with two of his Italian destroyers on each beam of *Dublin*, which in turn had taken station 3 miles on *Nino Bixio's* starboard beam.

So the cavalcade proceeded at 18 knots, still zigzagging, when at 9.32 a.m. Captain Kelly's ship sighted a periscope some 500 yards away on the port bow. *Dublin* opened fire with three guns at once, helm was put hard-a-starboard, and engines full speed ahead, with the intention to ram the submarine; but so quickly did things happen that before this cruiser had time to answer her helm the tracks of three torpedoes were manifested. One missile passed just ahead, another ran down the ship's side and passed astern, but the third struck *Dublin's* port side just where she pivoted. Captain Kelly had been able to avoid the first two by his helm: at the last moment he almost escaped the third by going full speed astern with his engines. But now that the hole had been made by the inevitable explosion, boats were swung out, a collision mat placed over the damage, and bulkheads shored up.

Resuming her course, whilst the destroyers cruised round at full speed, and one of them followed up the periscope without being able to reach her hull, the *Dublin* at 9.50 a.m. gradually began working up to  $17\frac{1}{2}$  knots in spite of the injury. A further thrill occurred just an hour later when the wireless message announced that the Italian armoured cruiser *Giuseppe Garibaldi* (which happened to be on the same course but some distance ahead) had been likewise attacked; wherefore Captain Kelly swerved off four points to port, but the submarines were sighted ten minutes later and evaded by frequent sharp alterations of



course, whilst the escorting destroyers tried by gunfire to keep the enemy down.

At 3.15 p.m. all danger ended with *Dublin's* arrival in Brindisi, when the ship's company was mustered and the total casualties found to be thirteen men killed. The conduct of the crew in their coolness and prompt obedience, but especially the Captain's handling of his ship, had saved *Dublin* from being lost altogether. Down below those in the engine-room department continued to steam the cruiser without any sign of disorganisation; but she was a smart ship, which had done fine work at the Dardanelles, and her commanding officer was destined one day to become a distinguished admiral. Of him, his seamanship and high moral qualities, shown under trying circumstances, Rear-Admiral Millo expressed the highest admiration.

But this valuable vessel must now be an invalid during more than four months. After pumping out the flooded compartment a cofferdam was prepared, enabling her to steam round into Taranto, where temporary repairs allowed her to reach the Italian dockyard at Spezzia. Particularly unfortunate had been this accident, since her sister the *Dartmouth* had developed trouble in her boilers which had further reduced her speed to 16 knots, and during the call at Malta there had been time only for the most hurried overhaul. Therefore back to Malta she must now be sent. The light cruiser *Amethyst* too, after much steaming in the Aegean and elsewhere, had developed defects in her turbines which were more than due for attention: so she was withdrawn to have a refit of several weeks in Taranto. Meanwhile two other light cruisers, *Topaze* and *Sapphire*, were sent to Brindisi, though their 22 knots would make them inferior to the fastest Austrian cruisers.

There could be no doubt that the small coastal submarines of the enemy were going to be a serious menace even to zigzagging warships. It so happened that inside the *Dublin* were found fragments of the torpedo, and on being examined by an Italian officer who had once spent a long time at Fiume there was evidence enough that the missile came from Austria and not Germany; that it had been made in the year 1912 by the Whitehead firm at Fiume. To-day we further know that the attacking submarine was U-IV, and that it was she who on July 18 was to sink the Italian cruiser *Giuseppe Garibaldi* which had been unsuccessfully attacked at the time of *Dublin's* wounding. That U-IV must be reckoned with as an enterprising foe had been proved when she

attacked the *Waldeck Rousseau* the previous October ; but this French cruiser happened to be lucky beyond all belief. Even when a torpedo came rushing towards her from U-35 (commanded by Arnauld de la Perière, the ablest German submarine captain who ever ravaged the Mediterranean) during the summer of 1916, this turned out to be one of the few occasions when that boat failed to triumph, and the Frenchman escaped. So likewise U-IV was one of those fortunates which survived right to the end of hostilities.

On an earlier page we saw that UB-15 was a small submarine which had arrived at the Adriatic from Germany by rail. Her captain was Lieutenant-Commander von Heimburg, and the combination could not have been better. This officer later on was given command of her sister, UB-14, and took her from the Adriatic to Constantinople, which in itself must be regarded as no mean effort. On the way thither he sighted near Budrum the troopship *Royal Edward* in the Aegean carrying 31 officers and 1335 men from Alexandria to Mudros. Von Heimburg took a long shot (about 5000 yards) and torpedoed her aft, so that the steamer went down bows up and 132 lives were lost. Later (on September 2) she torpedoed also the transport *Southland* off Strati Island, making a wide hole on the starboard quarter, though luckily this steamer did not sink and was towed safely into Mudros. Much more brilliant was the famous episode of November 5 this same year.

The *Turquoise*, which was the first and only French submarine that penetrated through the Dardanelles into the Marmara Sea, unfortunately got ashore, was captured, and taken into Constantinople. Still more regrettable, there were found among the French captain's papers a note that he would make a rendezvous off Rodosto on November 5 with the British submarine E-20. Now UB-14 chanced to be in Constantinople, but undergoing repairs and unready for service. It was now only November 2, and there might be a wonderful opportunity—the occasion of a lifetime—if they hustled. Von Heimburg made the best of things, the defects were temporarily rendered good, and the mechanical parts reassembled. One submarine, if properly handled, looks in the distance not less similar than one porpoise resembles another. As a result of enormous endeavour and magnificent energy UB-14 became seaworthy and suited for impersonating the *Turquoise*. Thus did the German keep the appointment off Rodosto, where he found the unsuspecting E-20 on the surface,

torpedoed her, sent her to the bottom, and only nine men were saved.

I have mentioned these incidents out of their sequence to indicate the professional ability of these young officers in the new type of war craft that so quickly had demonstrated a terrible power. It was on June 9, 1915, that in UB-15 during her maiden trip von Heimburg found himself off Venice, but also he had a neighbour. On the surface of these waters which had witnessed centuries ago the Venetian galleys with their Oriental silks coming homeward for rich merchants, lay the Italian submarine *Medusa*, and seldom did any newly appointed officer have such a free gift. Not yet was von Heimburg fully familiar with his boat's character, and on releasing a torpedo she tilted up her bows so that hands were hurriedly sent forward to counteract the inclination ; but the missile had done its work, and on coming to the surface von Heimburg picked up the surviving six Italians. He had begun well, and soon repeated his success.

We saw just now that *Amalfi* (9956 tons, 23 knots, heavily mounting four 10-inch, eight 7.5-inch, and sixteen 3-inch guns) was one of Italy's armoured cruisers. She with the other units of the *Pisa* division had recently been transferred from the south to Venice, so that this armoured cruiser had been ordered to support destroyers making a sweep down the Istrian coast. Alas ! at daylight of July 17 she had reached a point where most of the destroyers were a long way off, and only two small ones escorted her. UB-15 was working this northern sea again, and von Heimburg had his target nicely framed in the lens. A torpedo was fired, the *Amalfi* received it, down sank the Italian very quickly with seventy-two of her people, though most lives (including the Italian Rear-Admiral) were saved by the patrolling small craft in the vicinity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Heino von Heimburg had joined the submarine service at the beginning of war, and his arrival in Austria was by train ; his first Adriatic command being UB-15, and his second was UB-14. His name is to be borne in mind because of the great sensation which he created on two separate occasions. That UB-15 sank the submarine *Medusa* was bad enough, but the loss of such a valuable ship as *Amalfi*, with the risk of so many lives affected the Italians in much the same manner as we had once been staggered by the loss of three *Cressys*. There were ghastly, unforgettable incidents such as that of *Amalfi's* senior engineer officer being sucked into her revolving propellers and having one of his arms severed at the shoulder, though the ship's surgeon most gallantly swam to the bleeding sufferer, took off a belt and used it for a tourniquet. Both officers were afterwards picked up by a boat.

But when on August 13 this same year von Heimburg (now in UB-14) torpedoed the British transport *Royal Edward* (11,117 tons) in the Aegean, some half a dozen miles west of Kandeliusa, with the loss of 132 people, including the ship's master, the gravity lay not so much in the tonnage and the number of deaths, as that this

Anxious times this July had brought, and the tiny steel tadpoles were already a terror to the deep-draught vessels. The two older Italian battleships *Benedetto Brin* and *Margherita* (13,214 tons, four 12-inch and four 8-inch guns) had come to strengthen the Duke's forces at Taranto, and the whole fleet was about to go out for tactical exercises, but a submarine fired two torpedoes at a patrolling torpedo-boat the previous day, and whilst no damage occurred, this hint was formidable enough to keep the battle fleet in harbour. The Italians were all too short of torpedo craft and already had lost one of 120 tons (No. 5 PN) on June 26 in the north Adriatic as another of UB-15's exploits.

Owing to this shortage one of Admiral Thursby's officers had organised a patrol of ships' boats to watch the coast 20 miles on the side east of Taranto's entrance, consisting of three picket boats, eight launches or cutters. Armed with guns, torpedoes, and explosive creeps, they were prepared for operations, when at 3.30 one July morning a submarine came right through their patrol lines. Two of the picket boats nearly torpedoed her, but disappointment was bitter when she turned out to be French. Here, however, was just another example of the previously mentioned indifferent dissemination of vital intelligence.

The loss of *Giuseppe Garibaldi* was on this wise. An Italian expedition of cruisers and destroyers under Admiral Trefani, flying his flag in this 7294 tons armoured cruiser, set forth on July 18 with the object of bombarding the Austrian railway bridge near Ragusa (which had been lately rebuilt after previous destruction by another cruiser, *Francesco Ferruccio*). They were likewise to shell Gravosa barracks and establishments, besides destroying at Ginpana Island<sup>1</sup> the wireless station and cables, the intention being to keep the Austrians on the move and draw troops away from other spheres of action. It did succeed to the extent that the cruisers bombarded the railway bridge for an hour and then turned seaward; that a division of destroyers shot up Gravosa

was the first British merchant steamer thus to be destroyed in the Mediterranean. Other German submarine officers would follow his example, and the work of protecting the lines of communication, whether by patrols or escort, must develop into a terrible problem. Had not Helsing in U-21 on July 4 sunk the first French steamer off Helles when he torpedoed the 5600 tons transport *Carthage*, though the latter happened to have been engaged for the last three days landing munitions?

<sup>1</sup> Ragusa (now known as Dubrovnik) lies some 25 miles north-west of Cattaro (now Kotor). Gravosa (now called Gruz) is a harbour that is officially known as Dubrovnik II, situated on the south side of Ombla inlet. Ginpana Island, which has changed its name to Sipan, still has a telegraph cable connecting it to the Dalmatian coast. One thinks of this island as forest clad, with fertile valleys inshore of bold, rocky cliffs.

barracks, burning much railway stock, including a number of locomotives; and that another division under Admiral Millo reached Ginpana Island, only to find that the wireless station had been removed inland and the people were very friendly to the Italians who came ashore. Nevertheless, the expedition involved a cost that results scarcely justified. Surely the proximity of Cattaro—a mere hour's steaming distance for Austrian cruisers of the *Admiral Spaun* class—was too obvious a condition of the gamble?

The trouble, however, came from above and below, not on the surface. On the passage across the Adriatic the Italian ships were sighted by an Austrian aeroplane which of course ran back into Cattaro with the news. That expert submarine U-IV, which had been robbed of complete victories when attacking *Waldeck Rousseau* and *Dublin*, now caught *Giuseppe Garibaldi* after the latter had finished her hour's bombardment and withdrawn seaward. One torpedo hit, the cruiser was fatally injured, turned right over and sank, though Admiral Trefani and most of the officers and men were saved.

It is fairly certain that within a few days the Austrians, doubtless presuming a more intense bombardment would be made by the Italian battle fleet, sent over one of the German UC submarines to lay a trap, since on July 27 four mines were discovered in the fairway off Taranto, and on the previous day an enemy submarine had not merely been seen but had been attacked before seeking escape by diving.

So, by reason of the geographical situation, where one long coast-line lies opposite the enemy's, there was bound to be a series of minor operations rather than one great decisive fleet action. Between Cattaro and Brindisi the distance is only 110 miles, which could always be covered by such fast vessels as cruisers and destroyers during darkness of the shortest nights. However unfruitful of strategical results, raids and reprisals would accordingly be the main characteristics of naval operations, but especially because neither rival was eager to risk his battleships. And, whilst we may regard the Austrian islands off the Dalmatian coast, with their intricate channels, as the enemy's front line trenches, there was one situated at mid-Adriatic in a kind of no-man's sea.

This Isola Pelagosa lies some 28 miles from the Italian Gargano Promontory, whence it is another 35 miles to Isola Lagosta, the most southern of the Dalmatian group. Sooner or later something

was bound to happen at these lonely islands : their very situation suggested that they might change ownership more than once. Pelagosa is just an uncultivated rock with a lighthouse, a useful mark for ships navigating this sea, but the currents hereabouts are tricky. Lagosta is not less important as a point of departure, but it covers a wider area and rises higher, possessing one village and a small landlocked harbour besides its lighthouse.

It was known that the Austrians were using Pelagosa as a look-out station, wherefore in June the Italians began making plans for seizing that and Lagosta ; but then their Admiralty changed their minds.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ISLAND STORY

**A**S an example of vacillation and delay, with the unhappy consequences inevitable and patent, few chapters in modern naval history are more illustrative than the following. It is surely a plain lesson of the baneful effect which comes through lack of clear strategical thinking : a proof that though a nation may spend millions to provide ships, guns, and torpedoes, they are of little worth unless properly employed.

After it had been decided that nothing was to be done concerning Pelagosa and Lagosta there followed protestations, expressed so strongly that at the beginning of July the Italian Admiralty again altered their resolve : Pelagosa should be captured on July 12 and Lagosta about a week later. So a small expedition steamed to the former, landed without opposition, and left a garrison of 40 men with five 75 mm. guns. Having entrenched themselves and mined the approaches to seaward, they settled down and waited, whilst the Italian newspapers published (with the Censor's approval) columns of praise for this "brilliant" achievement.

Surprises then began to take place, the first happening twenty-four hours after landing, when half a dozen scared Austrian signalmen were discovered hiding in a cave. Next day came a more virulent shock with the arrival of two Austrian torpedo-boats accompanied by an aeroplane, and the island was shelled. Stationed off Pelagosa was an Italian submarine, which now began working round to make attack, but the aeroplane observed her, the torpedo-boats took fright and made off. A few days afterwards, as the reader will remember, came the bombardment of the Dalmatian coast and the sinking of *Giuseppe Garibaldi*.

As a result of this loss and the bombardment of Pelagosa, the Italian authorities once more modified their decision : this island should be further strengthened by five more guns (76 mm. and 4-inch), an anti-aircraft gun, and the garrison should be increased. All of which was done, but Lagosta would be ignored. Simultaneously with the occupation of Pelagosa on the 12th two French



destroyers had raided Lagosta, the cable had been cut, a party of seamen had destroyed the cable-house, and got back aboard with the loss of one man. They then destroyed by gunfire what was believed to be a depot for submarines, and a considerable quantity of supplies, including tons of oil fuel. But there the matter ended, and Lagosta was not occupied by the Italians.

The next incident occurred on July 28, when the Austrians sent over towards Pelagosa a force consisting of one *Admiral Spaun* class cruiser and four destroyers; but whilst the latter went in, bombarded the island, put a party ashore, who tried to retake the place but were easily driven off by the garrison, the cruiser remained some ten or twelve miles off, where a good look-out could be kept for smoke on the horizon and Italian funnels. Once more a submarine—this time a French one—like a stealthy cat leaping at pigeons, attacked the destroyers, tried torpedoing but failed, and was in turn hunted as well as unsuccessfully bombed by the four. It was subsequently learned that the garrison did not reply with their 76 mm. guns, excusing themselves by stating they were anxious to prevent the enemy knowing what armament the island possessed. When, however, a good many of the Austrians had landed, the Italians opened fire with machine-guns and rifles from entrenched positions, losing one man killed and one wounded.

Now tidings of this bombardment in progress reached Taranto at 6 a.m., but instead of immediately taking measures either by falling upon the enemy off the island, or cutting him off from his home port, a discussion went on as to what should be done. Talk—not action! Finally it was decided to *wait*—till 10 a.m.—for more news; but if none should arrive, a cruiser and some destroyers should be sent out from Brindisi. Actually these started at noon, for which reason they did not cover the 130 miles and reach Pelagosa till 8 p.m. At this time of the day the incident had already passed into history, and they could do nothing.

A similar reluctance manifested itself on July 31, when information came that the four older Austrian battleships of the *Erzherzog*<sup>1</sup> class, together with three cruisers and sixteen destroyers, had left Pola and were coming south. This was known because every morning, and every evening at 7.30 p.m., an aeroplane used to fly out from Venice over the enemy's base. The fleet mentioned were inside the harbour during the former visit, but were gone by the

<sup>1</sup> Three of these were of 10,433 tons with four 9·4-inch guns, whilst the fourth was of 14,268 tons with four 12-inch guns. All were of about 20 knots.

second. It may be stated that the objective did not turn out to be as the Italians expected : though it was believed that, following the repulse of the 28th, the Austrians were now about to deliver an attack on Pelagosa with some force and determination.

Curiously, the Italians made no attempt to intercept, the strange argument being that the enemy might delay his attack for some days; and that if he did, the small sea-keeping abilities of the Italian destroyers would not permit of the latter to be retained steaming round the island. British naval officers marvelled that such destroyers were not even sent to the island of Tremiti—scarcely 40 miles south-west of Pelagosa, affording anchorage, possessing telegraph communication with the mainland, and less than two hours' steaming distance—ready to shove off at the right moment. In Venice were now stationed the *Pisa* class armoured cruisers, whose 22 knots speed and 10-inch as well as 7.5-inch guns would have been able to put up a fight against the *Erzherzogs*. But no ! Strict orders had been given that these powerful cruisers were to be kept inside harbour. Nothing, except to send one more submarine, was therefore done for Pelagosa. The Austrian Fleet, after 48 hours' absence, returned to Pola without having called at Pelagosa. But observe the encouragement which all this lack of initiative gave the enemy, who might have been brought to conclusive action had all the overwhelming strength of allied battleships and cruisers from Taranto and Brindisi been energetically employed.

Merely to rely on submarine defence for Pelagosa was foolish : the game of stealth could be played by both parties. So, on August 5 the Italian submarine *Nereide*, one of the newer boats built two years previously, displacing 485 tons on the surface, was lying stopped on the water unloading stores for the garrison, when that expert Austrian submarine, U-V (which in April had sunk the *Leon Gambetta* with Admiral Sénès), caught her beautifully. Of course, the Austrians well knew the island, what was going on, position of the guns, the submarine defence ; for twice every day an aeroplane flew over and made her report. U-V merely had to wait for the chance which must come, and never could it be brighter than now. One torpedo was fired, but it missed, and the startled Italian began diving ; but a second silver fish darted forth and exploded against *Nereide* just forward, so that vertically she foundered in about 75 feet, some 300 yards from the shore, and the island's marine defence proved itself useless.

Thus the days went on, the expected attack by cruisers and

destroyers had not yet arrived, but could now be a matter of only a short while. No steps, however, had been taken against the obvious ; no plans made for sending out a strong force that should teach their enemy a grave lesson. Meanwhile the Austrian submarine service suffered two reverses, though scarcely due to Italian direct action. After the *Amalfi* disaster Italy had become nervous as to the fate of Venice, and laid a mine-field off that port. On August 8 came over the Austrian U-XII, which originally belonged to the Whitehead firm and holed the *Jean Bart* instead of sinking her. This had been during December, and the submarine had not distinguished herself since : but with a quick flash she went up on the Venetian mine-field, and down to the same doom as *Nereide*.

On the evening of August 12 U-III was working the Otranto Straits, and might have been justified in hoping she could avenge the loss of her sister ; for, having regard to the comparative narrowness of this belt (some 40 miles between Capes Otranto and Linguetta) and the patrol method then in vogue, the wonder is that so many surface ships got through untouched. This should have been a submarine's paradise, with the normal currents half those of the Dover Straits, no interrupting shoals, but deep water for diving everywhere. Even close into Cape Otranto at one side, and Cape Linguetta on the Albanian shore, there are respectively 52 fathoms and 39 fathoms,<sup>1</sup> whilst in mid-straits the depths increase to 500 fathoms and more.

Along here was patrolling the Italian auxiliary cruiser *Citta di Catania*, when U-III fired a couple of torpedoes at her, though both missed. The *Catania* then tried to ram her assailant, and claimed to have succeeded, though enemy prisoners later proved that she had failed. Destroyers were sent out to intercept the Austrian, and at dawn of the 13th the French *Bisson*, with two other destroyers that were Italian, sighted her and went full speed at the foe. The *Bisson* opened fire with her 4-inch gun, the first two shots fell short, the third hit, and down went U-III for the last time. An extraordinary feature of this affair is that whilst the enemy saw the destroyers coming, the former seems to have been over-confident and thought he had plenty of time for diving into obscurity.

After the first of these reverses the Austrians had some revenge before the second took place. On August 11 they sent a couple of destroyers so close to Bari as to be no farther off than 300 yards.

<sup>1</sup> A fathom is 6 feet.

Now this town is quite adjacent to the sea on a low projecting point, and stands up conspicuously with its twin steeples, a cathedral, lighthouse, chimneys, and harbour entrance. Easy enough was the task of bombarding the signal station, and some shells actually fell into the hospital. No reply came to the attack, because there were no guns ; and, in spite of protests, the Italians had not seen fit to provide them, the argument being that if Bari were made a defended place, it would no longer be secure from attack. The probability of immunity should surely have been at such a date considered remote, for this happened to be the seventh occasion when bombardment had frightened its townsfolk.

Naturally, the coastal population began to cry out for protection, and this unrest manifested itself in the blanked-out columns of the *Corriere di Puglie*, no less than in the editorials praying the public not to send in any more complaints about being shelled, but to put their trust in the Government. Meanwhile submarines came across frequently from Austria—doubtless they were those UC units Germany had sent by rail to Pola—and dropped their mines off such ports as Vieste (on the Gargano Promontory) due south of Pelagosa, off Taranto, and also off Brindisi. Altogether by the middle of August something like a hundred of these “eggs” were discovered moored : it was quite evident that the enemy at this time displayed the greater enterprise, and was endeavouring to block the Allied ships from leaving harbour.

Then on August 17 came the expected attack on Pelagosa, which as before was not specially guarded against such surprise. An Austrian squadron of two light cruisers and twenty destroyers appeared off the island at 5 a.m. During the next two hours they went on bombarding, firing most of 7000 shells ; but that an enemy should be allowed so long to remain without interference seems hardly credible when we remember that the tip-and-run German raids against our English east coast never permitted the visitors to hover more than a few minutes.

Nevertheless, this deliberate and easy Austrian raid, under the most favourable circumstances, does show once more the futility of such ventures, and the few results obtainable when warships attack the land instead of other ships. Over 6000 shells ! Fired without haste or embarrassment ! And the result was as follows : one water-tank split, one anti-aircraft gun damaged, one officer and two men killed, about fourteen wounded. At the top of this perpendicular island of rock stood out boldly against the skyline the small chapel of San Michele, which the most

inexperienced rifleman could not have avoided hitting. Needless to say, the chapel was destroyed, and this had some seriousness for the garrison, since the building was storehouse for their provisions. Apart from the above, the island defences were still unimpaired at 7 a.m., yet the Italian authorities were so impressed that orders presently came for this useful look-out station in the centre of the Adriatic to be evacuated ; wherefore the garrison, guns, stores, and the rest were brought back to Brindisi.

Only a few days previously Rome had been again pressed to capture Lagosta, and again the official mind had swung round. Yes, they agreed to send an expedition. A landing party of 500 men was being prepared at the naval base, Spezia (Italy's Portsmouth), guns were being got ready, transport arranged, entrenching implements assembled. Nets to be laid against submarines had been collected, the men had been given a special training and held in readiness to go aboard directly the show was about to begin. But, instead of taking courage from Pelagosa, its loss of some drinking water and provisions ; instead of congratulating themselves that this strategical spot had defeated the Austrians doing their damndest ; it was now decided that the Lagosta expedition should be washed out.

On the day when Pelagosa was finally bombarded the Italian light-cruiser *Quarto* (3300 tons, 29 knots), together with four destroyers, chanced to be cruising off Bari, and doubtless their presence gave comfort to the inhabitants. Two days previously another British light cruiser, *Bristol* (4820 tons, 25 knots), had come to join up at Brindisi, so she received orders to raise steam with all despatch and join *Quarto*. Now Bari is distant 80 miles from Pelagosa, and Brindisi we have seen to be much farther. No wonder, then, that by the time *Quarto* arrived the enemy had departed. All that the Allied cruisers and destroyers could do was to cover the evacuation when that decision was sent.

The Adriatic position three months after Italy had entered hostilities was accordingly not too good. The enemy had been allowed much freedom of action so that he could bottle up our fleet bases with submarines and mines, bombard undefended towns, and make the blockade of little account. The Otranto Straits were free for all submarines to come and go as they wished. Definitely the Italians had decided against attacking Austria's submarine bases, and intended now to prosecute the war with small anti-submarine craft. In short, whilst conserving their bigger surface vessels, they were by this negation to make the Adriatic

a threat to the Mediterranean and Aegean, since what Hersing in U-21 had done other big U-boats coming out from Germany could continue.

If desired, the smaller Austrian boats could refuel and victual at Pelagosa, Lagosta, or Corfu : no action was being taken to prevent them. Indeed, there now came a report that telephonic communication was being installed between the north part of Corfu island and Butrinto, which meant additional efficiency for the enemy near the Otranto Straits. Whilst it was learned from prisoners that Pola was the main base to which submarines must always return to make good any big defects, such southern ports as Cattaro and Corfu (where the German Emperor owned a palace) were always being visited.

Already by June 1915 British merchant vessels passing through the Mediterranean had been warned that enemy submarines were using that sea, so instructions went forth that shipping was to avoid the customary tracks, show no navigation lights " except at discretion to avoid collision." Here master mariners who for most of their lives had been wont to follow precise routes and to see that their lights always burned brightly, found themselves taking navigational risks for which in peace-time they would have received censure. They were told to darken ship between sunset and sunrise, yet (in a big liner especially) it was very seldom that this could be done perfectly. Presently they learnt that zigzagging by night was not less important than by day ; since statistics were to show that an average of fifty per cent represented the amount of shipping torpedoed during the dark hours. They learned likewise the supreme value of keeping look-outs stationed at different parts of the ship, that the crow's nest must be as high as possible because it was the best place whence to sight submarines waiting on the surface. But likewise must smoke be kept down to the minimum, for this would be the first sign for the lurking enemy, and would come into view before the crow's nest.

There were various reasons which now were to make the Mediterranean so attractive for those U-boat captains who for most of twelve months had been operating in the treacherous North Sea, penetrating the obstructions of the Dover Straits (sometimes with many hair-raising experiences), being half frozen off the Orkneys, or continuously washed by Atlantic waves off south-west Ireland. Sometimes they had been chased by destroyers, occasionally rammed even by trawlers, and now they were being sunk by mystery ships. It would be safer to be in the

Mediterranean, even if it meant going right round the British Isles first, since the Dover Straits had become too unhealthy.

Hersing's pioneer voyage, and his easy victories at the Dardanelles, the wonderful praise he had received at the hands of German admirals, Turkish officials, and the whole of his country's Press, had aroused just the right spirit of emulation. His original mission was primarily military—to sink Dardanelles men-of-war. His successors were to attack everything of the Allies that floated, but especially merchant steamers. Cattaro was to be the U-boats' base, which would not seem so far distant when coming back to Germany by train on leave. The Otranto Straits, they learned, need cause no anxiety; anti-submarine arrangements in the Middle Sea were said to be conspicuous by their absence—apparently few patrols and no Q-ships—with all the targets that the greediest commanding officer could desire; no likely political complications through American interests; numerous troopships going to or from the Aegean; plenty of lonely, secluded bays along the North African coast, behind some Aegean island, or along the coast of Asia Minor. The latter especially would be convenient for making temporary repairs, taking down a defective motor, sending the collapsible dinghy ashore for a sheep or fresh fruits, giving hands a few hours for a swim, and the officers a chance to catch up with overdue sleep.

Yes—the freedom, the prizes, the warm glamour of the Latin Lake, as a change from the cramped anxiety of life among the northern mists, were most tempting. Nothing since the days of buccaneers and privateers had ever suggested such possibilities. Given the best boats, and the captains who, during the preceding war months, had shown their capacity for destruction, Germany knew perfectly well that where the small Austrian flotilla had so well succeeded, the deep-sea boats would make history.

Between the first anniversary of the Great War's commencement and the middle of September 1915 there left Germany by sea and reached Cattaro four submarines other than Hersing's U-21, and a fifth followed in November. Total six. It was the idea of Admiral von Tirpitz, and the old sailor felt somewhat nervous as to their fate. But it was whilst some of these were still on passage out that Italy, on August 21, declared war against Turkey, yet not for another twelve months was the former at enmity with Germany. Thus we shall witness the strange situation of German U-boats in the Adriatic being attacked by British naval craft based on an Italian port.



## CHAPTER V

### THE VOYAGE OUT

WITH excellent prospects before them, the two boats U-34 and U-35 left Heligoland on August 4, 1915. The former's captain was Lieutenant-Commander Rücker, who had already shown his characteristics when he operated off the Irish coasts the previous weeks, doing considerable harm to shipping, though he had a narrow escape in June when the armed trawler *Ina Williams* made him dive hurriedly to avoid gunfire. On one occasion Rücker had sunk six steamers in three days. It was this officer who shelled the outward-bound Cardiff steam-trawler *Hirose* and then after capture sank her by bombs. On the same June 5 he shelled the fishing trawler *Victoria*, killing several of her crew and sinking the ship. Neither of these two craft was armed.

U-35 was commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Kophamel, who had been one of the first submarine officers to go round the British Isles north about to the Scillies. He had worked off the south Irish coast in company with Rücker that June, and was destined to become even more successful in the Mediterranean. Now both these boats safely reached Cattaro on August 23. Next, on August 27, U-39 (Lieutenant-Commander Forstmann) started out from Heligoland, whilst U-33 (Lieutenant-Commander Gansser) left Borkum on August 28. Their individual voyages were of identical length, U-39 reaching Cattaro on September 15 and U-33 on the 16th. Forstmann was very much the Prussian type, angular, dignified, professionally distinguished. In the first October of hostilities, when commanding U-12, Forstmann had early won glory when he sank H.M.S. *Niger* (an old gunboat) anchored unprotected off Deal. During the following May, having been appointed to U-39, he almost succeeded in torpedoing H.M.S. *Dominion* whilst the 3rd Battle Squadron cruised the North Sea. On the way out to the Adriatic Forstmann lost no opportunity for attacking anything that crossed his course. On September 2, south-west of the Fastnet, he shelled the British barque *William T. Lewis*, loaded with over £10,000 worth of timber, and

left her to sink. Actually—thanks to her cargo—she remained afloat. Having passed through the Gibraltar Straits, Forstmann was sighted on September 8 at 5.30 p.m. off Point Sabinal (about 130 miles east of Cartagena) heading to the south-east. Between Cartagena and Algiers he managed to sink, on the 9th, the French S.S. *L'Aude*, the British S.S. *Cornubia*, and the French S.S. *Ville de Mostaganem*. These were all cargo vessels,<sup>1</sup> since U-boat captains had been forbidden to sink passenger steamers owing to the delicate situation which had arisen when violent protests followed the sinking of the White Star liner *Arabic*.

Gansser, likewise, profited by the chances that came to him whilst outward bound, and these began on September 1 when he sank the S.S. *Whitefield* 95 miles north of Cape Wrath. Three days later when west of the Fastnet he sank the S.S. *Cymbeline* and the S.S. *Mimosa*—all British—as well as the Norwegian S.S. *Storesand*. Not content with this score, he destroyed the British S.S. *John Hardie* on the 6th when 98 miles west of Cape Finisterre. Thus his track down the Atlantic was well marked by wreckage. Without difficulty Gansser passed through the Gibraltar Straits, but at noon of the 9th, when some 50 miles west of Alboran Island, was sighted by H.M. Torpedo Boat 95, who fired four rounds at U-33, though she dived into safety and was not hit.

Finally, in November Lieutenant-Commander Max Valentiner brought his U-38 from Germany to Cattaro also. Of the twelve most brilliant German submarine captains throughout the war these six—Hersing, Forstmann, Valentiner, Kophamel, Rücker, and Gansser—in the order here mentioned were exceptionally able. Not without reason had their country selected them, and they were justified as well by previous history as by results. Valentiner was the typical clean-shaved modern Teutonic naval officer, of strong character and quick mind, cleft chin and fine forehead. None the less, he gained notoriety at the end of the war, being placed by Great Britain on the list of war criminals for having sunk without warning the P. & O. liner *Persia* on December 30, a few weeks after arriving in the Mediterranean.

<sup>1</sup> War is war, and submarine commanders were obeying orders, but lovers of the old sailing ships can never forgive Forstmann for having, on July 3, during one of his trips, sunk that famous *Fiery Cross*. She is sure of immortal remembrance as being one of the China clippers which used to sail home with cargoes of tea to the Thames, and during the historic race of 1866 led the way for some time against *Ariel* and *Taeping*. Later she was sold to Norway, and it was under the Norwegian flag that she was to be sunk off the Scillies.

But he had barely reached the Middle Sea than he caused no little sensation by an act that must ever be recorded with horror.

Before that occasion, however, Valentiner had won distinction in the Narrow Seas. On June 19, 1915, whilst the 3rd Cruiser Squadron were making a sweep in the North Sea, he hit H.M.S. *Roxburgh* with a torpedo, though she did not sink. When later this summer he was sent to wage war against shipping off the Irish coast (where his great friend Lieutenant-Commander Schwieger had sunk the *Lusitania*) he performed the amazing feat of sinking in five days thirty ships: three sailing vessels, five trawlers, and twenty-two cargo carriers. That happened in August, and during this same trip he just missed,<sup>1</sup> by no fault of his own, rendering a unique service for two more of his friends. The story is as follows, and well illustrates Valentiner's enterprise.

It begins a year previously when, on August 28, 1914, the German light cruiser *Mainz* was sunk in action off Heligoland following a splendid contest. Most of the German officers and men were rescued and taken off by British gallantry in going alongside the flaming vessel, but two German officers bravely declined to leave till of a sudden the *Mainz* turned over, and these two found themselves in the North Sea. One was Commander Hermann Tholens (the cruiser's second-in-command) who, after swimming about for a long while, had the luck to be picked up by one of our destroyers and brought into harbour. A period in Chatham Naval Hospital was followed by being transferred to a prisoners' camp at Dyffryn Aled, near Denbigh in North Wales.

The folly of sending captive sailors to any locality within easy reach of the sea ought to have been obvious: sooner or later they find the temptation to escape almost irresistible and not infrequently quite practicable. One of the best instances was that of Count von Luckener when at last this raider found his liberty ended, and imprisonment in New Zealand so near to the water that of course he got away, stole a boat, and was recaptured only after many miles.

Now most of the inmates at Dyffryn Aled were ex-submarine officers, among whom to be mentioned conspicuously was Lieutenant-Commander Hennig. Once he had been captain of U-18, and on September 27, 1914, had entered the Dover Straits where he attacked H.M.S. *Adventure*, this being the first time a German

<sup>1</sup> A full account of this adventure has been written by Commander Hermann Tholens in Chapter XVI of *Escapers All*, London, 1932.

underwater craft had ever got so far into the English Channel. Two months later (November 22) von Hennig had arrived in U-18 off Scapa Flow, having followed a steamer into the approaches ; but, finding that the Grand Fleet were not at home, he came out again, only to be spotted near Hoxa Head by the mine-sweeping trawler *Dorothy Gray*. The latter rammed U-18, damaging her so severely that the submarine nose-dived, struck the sea-bed, rushed to the surface, was rammed by the destroyer *Garry*, hit the bottom again, came up, drifted helplessly, fired star signals for aid, hoisted the white flag, and her people (with one exception) were taken off by the *Garry* as well as by another destroyer. The Germans had at the last minute opened the flooding valves, so that the boat sank.

We may be quite sure that this collection of brave, eager young sea officers discussed plans for escape from their Welsh confinement, and lost no time in making careful preparations. The question was how to fix up details for help from Germany. At Christmas 1914 some British prisoners were exchanged with certain of those at Dyffryn Aled, and thus a suggestion could be transmitted to the German senior submarine officer at home. Briefly the idea consisted in Tholens and von Hennig breaking out of camp, reaching the most westerly point of Great Orme's Head (near Llandudno) at an agreed time, which should synchronise with the arrival of a U-boat, who would take them off. Could Germany fix this up ? The signal would be an electric pocket torch waved about in a circle at night, and a suitable date would be either a Saturday or Sunday during the period of new moon.

After the German staff had examined the intention, it was decided that the selected day should be August 14, and the next problem concerned the means of conveying such news. Merely by referring in a chatty letter to a wedding about to take place "on August 14," the prisoners were informed that a couple of U-boats would be waiting off Great Orme's Head during the night of August 14-15. So far all the details had been ingeniously fitted in ; U-27 (Lieutenant-Commander Wegener) and U-38 (Lieutenant-Commander Max Valentiner) being assigned for the rescue. But mark how strangely destiny sports with human aspirations.

At 8.45 p.m. on Saturday, August 13, Tholens and von Hennig did manage to break out of their imprisonment, trudged through the night, and at 7.30 a.m. of the 14th found themselves in

Llandudno, where they took breakfast in a restaurant. Thence they made their way to Great Orme's Head near the lighthouse, concealing themselves among some brambles till night should fall, hoping at 10 p.m. to see the dim form of their U-boat. If everything worked smoothly they should be narrating to relatives at home in a few days their experiences of all these months: if, however, any hitch might occur and contact fail to be made, then both submarines and adventurers would be in peril.

Valentiner had been well chosen. Apart from his daring and cleverness, he was a special friend of Tholens and von Hennig. Leaving Wilhelmshaven on August 4, U-38 had travelled via the Shetlands and west coast of Scotland. After entering the Irish Sea, Valentiner's position at midnight on the 13th was 50 miles north-west of Great Orme's, where he met by appointment U-27. The latter had been sent out to make doubly sure of this escape. Together the boats made for the land so as to be off the Head in ample time.

The conditions turned out to be excellent. It was a dark, moonless night, the breeze only light, and the sea calm. Slowly the minutes ticked by after the long day of hiding had passed away. The agreed hour found Tholens and von Hennig on their feet down by the water waving the electric torch. Their hearts beat fast, their eyes peered into the shadows, they waited. No answer. Again the light was flashed. Still no response. Perhaps the submarines were too far away for such weak illumination?

The valuable moments were now slipping by all too quickly. Delay would be fatal, the weeks of preparation and yesterday's fortunate slipping away from internment sadly wasted. Badly their country just now needed every naval officer, but especially those experienced in submarines.

The two adventurers made a large bonfire on the shore, and every ten minutes waved a burning log. Surely Valentiner must see that?

But he saw it not!

Deeply disappointed, becoming gravely anxious, the ex-prisoners went into hiding again for the Monday, hoping to repeat their signals at night. Once more the sun rose and set, the hours spun round, but with night came a northerly gale which ruined all their hopes. As seamen, they recognised the utter impossibility of being taken off: it were useless to wait for a third night, and they left the spot. Meanwhile a hue and cry went round the Welsh district for two missing German prisoners, and that day

the arrest at Llandudno station concluded the incident. But why had Valentiner let them down ?

The answer is that he had done nothing of the kind, but by one of those minor mistakes which might happen to any stranger off an unfamiliar coast he had just failed to make contact. The surface speed of U-38 and U-27 was about 14 knots, so that they were able to reach the Head before dawn of Sunday, which was the original " wedding day." As nothing was seen of his friends ashore, Valentiner stood off to seaward during the light hours, dived, and went to rest on the bottom ; but thinking that one boat would be enough, now sent U-27 down the Irish Sea to get on with the sinking of merchant shipping.

On Sunday night Valentiner for a second time crept in, and very cautiously approached Great Orme's on the surface. Everything seemed to be working splendidly, with the quiet summer's sea, no tiresome patrols about, and no traffic. The crew were keeping a keen look-out for the slightest indication of their compatriots, and the collapsible boat was all ready to fetch them off. By now U-38 had stood in so close that only 30 yards separated her from the rocks, though the latter were difficult to be seen in the shadows and blackness. Switching off his Diesels, Valentiner turned over to electric power, flooded his tanks, and thus was partially submerged so as to lessen his boat's prominence, and also decrease the possibility of being damaged by the rocks : if U-38 should touch, he could float her off by blowing his tanks.

Still closer in he risked taking her, but even now no suggestion of a light showed from the beach. No sort of contact was made, and at length he took U-38 to sea once more. Still optimistic, he waited off the coast till the third dawn, but the gale would have taxed even Valentiner's seamanship, so he gave up the project, followed U-27 down the Irish Sea, and got on with torpedoings. To-day we know that on the Sunday night Valentiner, Tholens, and von Hennig had the ugliest luck. U-38 got within 500 yards of her friends. She had, in truth, approached so close that a projecting ledge of rock intervened sufficiently high to prevent the rescuers from seeing the escapers' light. A plucky captain had really done his job too well, so the best-laid scheme of patient men ended in a complete fiasco. Nor was that all. Unwittingly, and by one of those entirely capricious freaks of chance, he had also sent Wegener to meet death.

The three boats at that time operating off the Irish coast and



making terrible havoc were U-27, U-38, and U-24. August 19 was for us a most unhappy day, no fewer than nine steamers being sunk in the Western Approaches, including the 15,801 tons liner *Arabic* with the loss of forty-four lives. This last tragedy was the work of U-24. Wegener in U-27 that same afternoon had stopped the Leyland liner *Nicosian*, being about to destroy her, when the now historic Q-ship *Baralong*<sup>1</sup> came along and destroyed U-27. There were no survivors.

From the above data we are able to form sufficient evidence that Hersing's five co-operators were likely to become terrors of the Mediterranean. After Valentiner had finished his Irish cruising, and had gone home for a refit, the crisis following the *Arabic* affair had fully ripened, and it seemed better that so able an officer should take his boat south into waters where neither *Baralongs* nor diplomatic distractions could make interference. Nor did he omit to display his ruthlessness on passage through the Mediterranean. He had not arrived at Cattaro before encountering the British S.S. *Mercian*, full of troops. Her he shelled without respite, killing twenty-three men, until the soldiers' machine-guns drove him off. That was on November 4, but during the next few days off the Algerian coast he unsuccessfully attacked several other British steamers, sinking also the *Buresk* and *Glenmoor* (each of more than 3000 tons). Off Oran he had already on the 3rd sent the French troopship *Calvados* to the bottom with the loss of 740 souls, only to complete this four days later by sinking the French transport *France IV*. A particularly bad feature was that when sinking the Italian liner *Ancona* not only did he fire on the passengers and crew taking to their boats, thereby sacrificing 208 lives, but at the time Valentiner was flying Austrian colours. Thus, if the diplomats cried out in protest that here was another *Arabic* case the reply could be made: "Nothing to do with a German submarine!" As to U-34 and U-35, they had not wasted much time in Cattaro before sinking the S.S. *Natal Transport* 40 miles west of Crete on September 4; the S.S. *Ramazan* 55 miles south-west of Cerigotto Island on the 19th; the S.S. *Linkmoor* 50 miles west of Cape Matapan on the 20th; the S.S. *H. C. Henry* 59 miles south of that same headland on the 28th; and the S.S. *Haydn* 80 miles south-east of Crete on the 29th. These being all colliers, oilers, or transports, the reader will perceive from the geographical positions

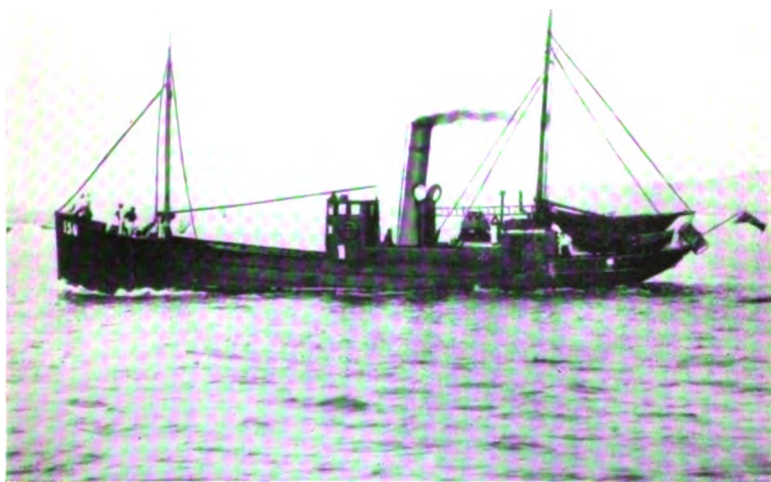
<sup>1</sup> For detailed account from original sources see my *Amazing Adventure*, London, 1935.

that the attacks were made directly against those lines of communication leading to the Dardanelles region.

It is well established that H.M.S. *Topaze*, whilst doing the Otranto patrol accompanied by Italian destroyers, sighted U-39 and U-33 as they came through those Straits on the 14th and 15th respectively of September, before these boats reached Cattaro on the following days. Their call-signs "V.F." and "V.J." were also taken in. But from September 22 begins the first attempt to create a proper organisation seeking to deny easy passage through the Straits for submarines, so that we had allowed the first five U-boats to come out from the North Sea and up the Adriatic into their base before any net drifters arrived on the scene.

How these little steamers were sent out from the United Kingdom and what results were able to be attained we can next consider.

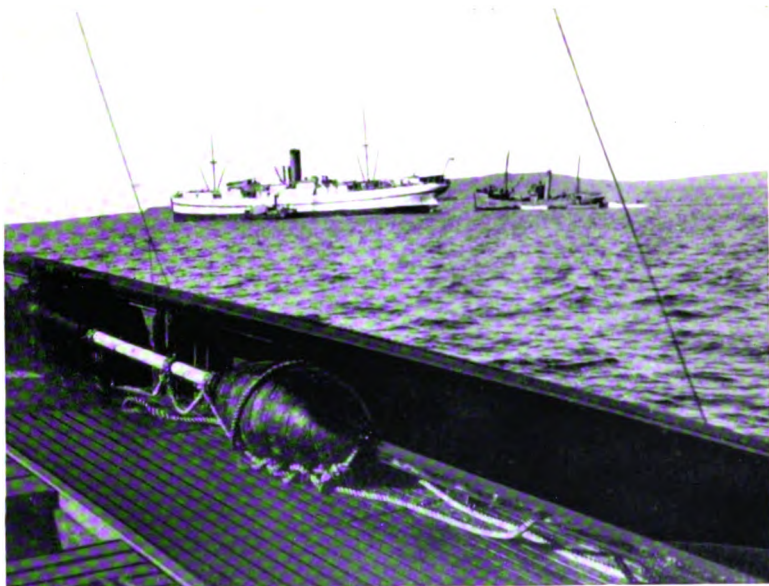
Fuller details of the Mediterranean sinkings will be seen in Chapter XVII.



TWO TYPICAL DRIFTERS AT SEA

(Top) : H.M.D. *Welcome Friend*.

(Bottom) : H.M.D. *Camperdown*.



#### DRIFTERS

In the foreground a drifter's deck with her "dan" buoy. In the distance drifter alongside hospital ship. Trawler waiting astern.



#### KEPHALO BAY, IMBROS

After a heavy gale in 1915.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LITTLE SHIPS

HAVING regard to the astuteness of our enemy's submarine captains everywhere manifested, it might seem on first consideration the height of foolishness to suppose that simple 9-knot steam-drifters with their rugged fishermen crews and fleets of nets could possibly be a match for elusive U-boats. Was it reasonable to imagine that steel submersible boats, big enough to motor all these miles under their own power, could be caught as herrings are trapped ?

But the first few months of war had shown that in such belts as the North Channel, which separates Ireland from Scotland, but especially across the Dover Straits, drifters lying to their nets might make the locality awkward for German propellers. Wherefore the British Admiralty on May 28, 1915, ordered thirty-one of the best steam-drifters at present working out of Poole (Dorset) to be got ready for Mediterranean service. Three months later a much more numerous flotilla was prepared at Falmouth ; the first were for use up the Aegean, and the second in the Otranto Straits.

The history of this bold dual decision, so original and unprecedented, is quite clear. On May 25 Hersing in U-21 had startled the world by sinking H.M.S. *Triumph* with remarkable facility, and a couple of days later treating H.M.S. *Majestic* in the same contempt. Two powerful battleships wiped out suddenly ! But if naval vessels were still to continue aiding by their guns our troops on the Gallipoli peninsula such bombarding units must be protected, and the most suitable means at disposal seemed to be the drifters' nets. Thus no time was wasted, and the orders came to Poole on the very day after *Majestic's* disaster.

Then developed those two other phases : firstly, the sinking of merchant steamers (the S.S. *Carthage* on July 4, followed by the *Royal Edward* on August 13) ; secondly, the arrival on August 27 at Cattaro of the initial two U-boats. The direct result of this was that further orders were quickly issued from the Admiralty on August 30, and a drifter flotilla for the Adriatic began to

leave Falmouth next day. It would be their duty to serve as an obstacle athwart the Otranto Straits. Something must be done to prevent a repetition of those two calamities which had ended identically, for both transports had gone down vertically bows up in the air, like human bodies sinking to their death.

When the fishermen crews learned that instead of being at sea for five days a few miles from the land, and then coming into port for two days' coaling, storing, and rest, they were now to go foreign in their ships, this was something quite unexpected, something that neither drifters nor drifter men had ever done in their conservative lives. Such little vessels, with their limited capacity for coal, had not been built for steaming long, non-stop, trips down across the Bay to Gibraltar, thence to the Mediterranean's other end. But the Admiralty had thought of all that; Poole was to select the best thirty-one, give them enough coal as well as provisions to last ten days. Fuel, charts, food, water, guns, indicator nets, and a month's advance pay, took some arranging, yet such were the keen energy and bustle that by the afternoon and evening of Friday, June 4, drifter after drifter left the quayside at Poole and anchored in the stream ready for sea. Late into the night this went on till, finally, at 3 a.m. of the next day, the long procession of tubby ships started off in a wonderful armada past the firs and green islands, the chalk-white cliffs, and over the harbour bar into the English Channel.

In charge of this most unusual outfit went Lieutenant-Commander C. E. Turle, R.N.,<sup>1</sup> who has been good enough to give me a detailed account. Such a trip of so many tiny craft had never been attempted since the Middle Ages, when single-sail vessels set out from Devonshire for Palestine and the Crusades. Certainly for a modern naval officer the responsibility of the drifters' care, the probability of some units getting lost, of stragglers breaking down, of collision, and various other sinister happenings, were likely to afford endless hours of anxiety. Under him were no naval ratings trained in long discipline, nor junior lieutenants whose naval education from Dartmouth to H.M. ships had inculcated a well-recognised facility for command. Instead were the hearty North Sea crews, with their own special ways of running a ship; and a few lieutenants of the Royal Naval Reserve, who but recently had been serving in trading steamers.

It is no small distance from Poole to Gibraltar, and even in

<sup>1</sup> Now Rear-Admiral (retired).

June this stretch of 1100 miles might be marked by patches of bad weather. Properly handled, and so long as her mizzen-sail does not blow out of its bolt-ropes, a drifter will behave most pluckily. As one who for a large portion of the war had command of such a vessel, I can bear witness to the kindly manner in which these craft rise to the seas when bows on. The wheel-house is fairly high, placed well aft, and a drifter's hull has a bold, sheer forward which keeps her dry ; but at the waist her freeboard has been made intentionally low, for convenience when hauling nets aboard. A beam sea, with a westerly gale in the Bay of Biscay, would find the drifters at their worst. They could certainly roll at the best of times, nor were they the most luxurious vessels that ever flew the White Ensign.

A typical drifter measured 88 feet long, with 19 feet beam, and about 10 feet draught. Her triple-expansion steam-engines could develop 34 horse-power, and she was of 31 net tons. With a clean bottom, machinery and boiler recently overhauled, a speed of 9 or  $9\frac{1}{2}$  knots could generally be obtained when pushed, but 8 knots more nearly represented her normal rate. Where a commissioned officer went in command a cabin had been fashioned for him between decks, using part of the space that in peace-time belonged to the fish-hold. With a table, a bunk, a coal stove, acetylene gas, a skylight, and a chair or two, life was tolerable, though somewhat trying during the winter months and long dark nights. Immediately abaft this cabin were stowed special nets. The crew of eleven, including the fishing skipper and engineer, were berthed principally right aft, though several hands had their habitation right forward.

It was a mistake to try running these crews on strictly Service principles : that rarely succeeded. The wisest method was to apply discipline such as would be found in a well-run yacht. Perhaps for a stranger appointed to live aboard one of these drifters the most trying items were not the rolling, nor the rats (which had come aboard to eat the kapok that floated the anti-submarine nets), but the best efforts of the cook, who meant splendidly, though failed sadly. When a man, through genuine patriotism, leaves his fishing village, and his calling as gravestone mason, to become cook at sea alongside his relatives, joints of meat somehow take on a rocky texture, and digestions suffer. It was the good sea air, the freedom from bricks and mortar, the confidence in each of these little ships, the affectionate allegiance which these crews displayed when once mutual under-

standing had been established, that made weeks and months in and out of the steel wheel-house so wonderful an experience.

Admiral Turle in the following anecdotes has given me further confirmation of how drifter life seemed to some of us. "The men were a magnificent lot," he writes, "and so were the skippers and mates. The discipline was truly of a sort different from that in a battleship, but there existed a loyalty to their senior officers and a readiness for hard work which made me appreciate their values."

It may be added that most of the drifter fleet came from Lowestoft and the north-east Scottish ports, especially those little harbours along the south side of Moray Firth, such as Buckie and Macduff. Of serious mien, seeming to any Englishman a little dour and speaking a strange dialect; their characters an interesting mixture of rough independence and blind reliance upon example; these crews, except perhaps for a visit to Northern Ireland, had never been beyond the North Sea till the war. And they were accustomed to live rather on the communal, profit-sharing principle, their fortunes varying with the rise and fall of the herring seasons. When the Navy took over these fishing fleets, fed them, clothed them, gave them a steady monthly pay, and provided for their widows, the whole of life's outlook had become suddenly altered, though human nature and its habits remained less affected.

"Many craft," continues Admiral Turle, "were manned by exactly the same crew who had been fishing in them a few months before, and often the entire crew would belong to one family. I recollect the Scotch drifter *Lizzie Flett* having an incident shortly after we arrived from Poole at the Dardanelles. Our type of craft, and their names, were strange to the warships in those waters. Now one evening, just after dark, the *Lizzie Flett* went alongside a cruiser without observing the customary naval procedure of first asking permission.

"The officer-of-the-watch in the cruiser hailed the drifter and demanded, 'Who are you?'

"The skipper was in the wheel-house, but a deck-hand, with austerest accent, answered:

"'The *Lizzie Flett*.'

"This sounded suspiciously like a 'leg-pull,' and the cruiser's officer (who had been the victim of a practical joke some days previously) indicated annoyance.

"'Oh, *Lizzie Flett*, is it? And what's your own name?'

"'Ahndrew Flett,' replied the deck-hand with deliberation.



“ ‘Dammit,’ flared up the questioner, ‘will you stop your nonsense? Ask the commanding officer to speak to me—who is he?’ ”

“ ‘Donald Flett,’ again answered truthfully the skipper’s nephew, who possessed one share in the ship, and by this right had named the drifter after his wife.

“ The naval officer, looking down from the cruiser, was now getting angry.

“ ‘Damnation! Are you all Fletts?’ he asked in sarcasm.

“ ‘No, sir,’ came the slow response. ‘The cook’s a Campbell.’ ”

I make no apology to the reader for this method of introducing the drifters and their people: they were to win rare admiration in the Aegean and Adriatic by their tenacity and bravery. Undaunted by the heaviest tasks, not even the Victoria Cross could be withheld when the time came for bestowing rewards. But that story will be told in due sequence. In order to complete the mental picture of these crews, let us finally note how their seafaring till now had influenced their attitude; remembering, at the same time, the exceptionally clear vision they possessed for sighting anything at long distance.

“ Perhaps,” says Admiral Turle, “ their different outlook is well demonstrated by the sharp classification of all ships. To them the shipping which really counted consisted of drifters and trawlers. Anything smaller than these two was a “little boat,” whether admiral’s barge, picket-boat, or drifter’s skiff; anything larger was a “big boat,” which included battleship, cruiser, monitor, destroyer.

“ One morning, as the light dawned, a cruiser appeared in an unexpected place, steaming down upon our line of moored nets. ‘Here, Commander,’ shouted the skipper, ‘yon’s a big boat going to muck up all our nets.’ ”

“ We hoisted the necessary signals, the cruiser hauled off, and later came in through the correct ‘gate.’ When an opportunity offered, I got hold of the skipper and ‘told him off,’ explaining how little he supported me in getting the men to use the correct designation of ships. He looked apologetic, but then caught sight of a mast and funnel-tip appearing on the horizon—probably some eight or ten miles away. He smiled, and asked what ship that was. I said I thought it was a trawler. But he replied:

“ ‘Yes. Certainly it’s a trawler: any fisherman can see that, but he can also recognise her as an *Aberdeen* trawler. You see,

sir, you know all the big boats and little boats, whilst I don't. But I do know all the trawlers and drifters.' "

The nature of such personnel, and how they would comport themselves at sea, could not be ascertained inside the shelter of Poole : that would have to be learned, and probably with many a disappointment. Uppermost in their leader's mind was the knowledge that this huge flotilla must reach the Aegean without delay. The failure of the battleships to burst their way through the Dardanelles, the necessity of calling in the Army's assistance, the latter's reliance on the Navy for bombarding enemy positions from the sea, then the fresh complication by the menace of torpedoes, had made the arrival of thirty-one drifters with their indicator nets to be urgent above all other considerations.

Nevertheless this outward voyage almost immediately seemed unpromising. Scarcely had they crossed Poole Bar into the Channel swell beyond Swanage, than at 4.45 a.m. they ran into one of those dense fogs which in most years visit our southern coasts when spring glides into summer and the water gets warmer. This sudden thickness when approaching the traffic routes was precisely the very condition least desirable for the flotilla's safety. " With great trepidation," narrates Admiral Turle, " I eventually turned back all alone, and felt my way towards Swanage." But what would become of the remaining thirty no longer visible, with the inhospitable rocks of Prawle Point and St. Alban's Head jaggedly adjacent ? Perhaps this bit of coastline might presently be strewn with drifter wrecks ?

By noon the sun was eating up the fog, and this officer on looking round began to count his units. Gradually the rising curtain revealed twenty-three of them, then another, two more, and, finally, only one drifter was missing. Far beyond his highest hopes ! At 1.30 p.m. the entire thirty-one were all present and correct. " This was a godsend to me : although I had hoped that the sailing orders to them were clear, I did not yet know my men. But henceforth nothing ever shook my confidence in them. I learned their capabilities, their trustworthiness, honesty, simplicity, seamanship, and capacity for hard work. All these men were splendid—every type of them : skipper, mate, engineer, deck-hand, fireman, cook."

The voyage was resumed, the English shores vanished, and away the drifters steamed in the direction of Ushant. " The flotilla was in five divisions, with six ships to each, and we started off with the *Realize* leading ; the five divisions being in line-ahead

disposed abeam at manœuvring distance—the interval of ships-in-column being one cable (200 yards). But station-keeping at first was troublesome: the skippers couldn't be made to appreciate the value of keeping close up, and of not straggling out into long lines. By midday of our first Sunday I was nearly frantic at the attempts to get them into position."

Of course, the problem was not easy: neither Commander Turle's divisional officers (the lieutenants) nor the skippers had been accustomed to steaming in close formation. All their lives these mercantile officers had been taught the principle of "safety first," and to keep clear of other shipping: owners had no future use for those who risked collision. And by long usage the fishermen had been wont to "go as you please." This naval idea might be all right for highly-trained squadrons, with plenty of bridge officers, suitable instruments, responsive machinery, and disciplined engineering staff. But it was not immediately feasible to unlearn, and then learn anew.

Nor could the signalling be done with that rapidity and efficiency customary in men-of-war. It would take some minutes before the lieutenant of a division had received and read the Commander's message, and in turn might find the task of communicating with the straggler quite impossible. Fortunately, in the drifter *Fisher Boy* was Lieutenant Murray, R.N.V.R., without a division of his own, and accompanying him went Engineer-Lieutenant Knox, R.N., the latter going out as the repair expert for any mechanical breakdowns. Murray acted as whipper-in for a while, and chased any ramblers back to where they belonged. By Monday, however, the formation was still ragged, so Lieutenant Smith, R.N.R., in *Welcome Friend*, was assigned the duty of leading the flotilla from the head of the centre division, whilst Commander Turle in *Realize* dropped back, himself acted as whipper-in, and found this modification to work so well that it was continued always.

So they processed down the Atlantic, an impressive sight and unusual for all the mariners coming up from foreign. One day there was roughish weather with a long swell, and although the thirty were now closed up, keeping pretty good station, there could seldom be seen twelve at a time: often, beyond the crest of a big wave and hidden in the deep trough, not one drifter would be visible.

Notwithstanding everything, a safe and reasonably good passage from Poole to Gibraltar was made in just eight days: the thirty-

one reaching there on Sunday, June 13, at 6 a.m. Here they stopped one and a half days, merely affording time enough to fill up empty bunkers and get fresh provisions. By 6 p.m. of Monday the armada was hurrying along up the Mediterranean at full speed, "with a fine soldier's wind to which we spread our large foresails." Never in their flights of fancy had these North Sea fishermen expected to be steaming their vessels within sight of Africa, still less to be bound for Turkish waters; but it would be a very long time ere the drifters once more rounded familiar pier-heads and landed fish on the quays. Some ships and some men would not come back: but a new generation would be growing up, inspired by the stories sent home to be read by cottage firesides.

Commander Turle must have felt gratified that the worst half of his voyage had finished without one unit missing. Here was evidence of the skippers' good seamanship, and the engineers' careful nursing of their machinery. Throughout Monday night, and all Tuesday, thirty-one propellers revolved with regular rhythm, but at 1 a.m. of Wednesday *Boy Daniel* broke down, and a hasty investigation showed that several others were beginning to feel the strain. Even if they lasted out till well up the Aegean, their arrival as cripples would not be welcome to Admiral de Robeck: wherefore Commander Turle made a slight reorganisation, sent *Boy Daniel*, *Fisher Boy*, and the 1st Division into Oran, there to make repairs and follow later.

The rest of the cavalcade carried on, and up the Aegean, reaching Lemnos by the afternoon of June 23; the number of days at sea from Dorset to the Dardanelles being just seventeen. To have made this long voyage from the English Channel with only one stop was no small achievement. Although the fleet's speed depended on that of its slowest unit, the daily runs in the last week of 132, 182, 167, 190, 200, and 180 miles were quite good when you remember that (excepting the signalman and the cook) the crew had to work watch-and-watch. Thus a man could never get more than four hours' sleep at a time. Nevertheless ships and crews, with their well-stowed nets, were in such good condition that next day two divisions sailed again to lay nets off Helles and Gaba Tepe.

Not merely that, but they remained off these positions during the next ten days. What with towing, hauling the nets, and shooting them again, keeping perpetual vigil all the while, this meant a considerable amount of work. Although there had been a lull lately in the submarine danger, the drifters had not arrived too

soon. Hersing, in his U-21, had been away from the scene at Constantinople, but on July 4 he was back off Helles when the French 5600 tons transport *Carthage* (previously mentioned) presented herself to him as an easy victim.

Early on that Sunday Commander Turle, with three of his divisions, had shot their nets around a French battleship, which from a spot to the southward of Kum Kale at the Dardanelles entrance was busily bombarding the enemy: but the latter made a pretty accurate reply, straddled her twice, and very shortly would have found the exact range. Whereupon the Frenchman relinquished the contest and steamed off, "leaving us" (writes Admiral Turle) "to haul our nets and try to regain Helles without delay, but we were too late. At 1 p.m. I saw the *Carthage* hit by a torpedo and sink at once." It was just a lucky chance that on the one occasion when drifters were away from Helles U-21 should have returned from her refit.

So the strenuous life went on. By July 26, when *Realize* was sent to Lemnos for boiler cleaning, she and her sisters during the last fifty-two days were found to have spent forty days completely at sea and eleven more partly at sea: no less than sixty-three times had every man been engaged hauling or shooting the nets. I think these simple statistics sufficiently indicate how whole-heartedly the fishermen toiled in their routine. But next, on August 7, came the notable landing of 10,000 soldiers at Suvla Bay. The possibility of cruisers, sloops, destroyers, or any vessel employed in this venture, being suddenly torpedoed could not be ruled out; and henceforth there would for months be a constant traffic to and from that locality. If U-boats made approach too dangerous, then the troops would eventually be starved of food and munitions into surrender.

Therefore the drifters laid a long line of nets to seaward of, and parallel with, the line from Suvla to Anzac; but an advantage was found, both in regard to labour-saving and efficiency, by attaching the nets to moored buoys. This left the drifters free to patrol, besides keeping watch on the trap.

It is easy enough to exaggerate, and again to underrate, the value of nets in anti-submarine warfare. During the first year, and after, too much faith was certainly placed in them, a criticism which includes all areas—the Narrow Seas no less than the Mediterranean. Throughout the years of hostilities Germany lost (as recorded on the memorial column at Kiel) exactly 199 submarines. I have spent considerable time examining each of

these cases in detail, and find that only nine of these losses can be ascribed to the mine-nets. This may seem ridiculously few, yet we must recollect that the sinkings by Q-ships amounted only to eleven submarines all told. Moored mine-fields and depth-charges were actually the chiefest foes to under-water craft.

On the other hand, these nets had a powerful negative rather than positive effect: they were obstacles of no little influence, they succeeded in protecting and warding off the enemy, even if they did not destroy. As an example, consider the incident in the Dover Straits when a U-boat, some fifteen miles off Cape Gris-Nez, was running on the surface, and she took fright at seeing two drifters ahead. She therefore dived to get out of their way but got tangled up in the drifters' nets. The German commanding officer then flooded his tanks, by sheer weight the submarine tore part of the net away, and eventually hit the sea-bed.

Investigation showed that she was apparently undamaged, though when they tried to go ahead on her electric motors the fuses gave out and the captain guessed that his propellers were fouled. At a convenient time he emptied his tanks, brought his boat to the surface, and she presented an amazing spectacle of net wires covering the hull from conning-tower to stern. One portion had jammed itself between rudder and an after hydro-plane, the bight winding itself round the propeller-blades till they ceased to revolve. Only after difficulty and by using the oil engines to part the wire, did this submarine get free. She went back to Zeebrugge thoroughly scared, and for months the Dover Straits were considered so unhealthy that U-boats bound beyond the North Sea must go all the way round Scotland.

In like manner these Aegean nets, with their indicator-buoys which began to burn a calcium smoke whenever fouled, were such an awkward menace to the low-lying submarines that if the Germans sighted a drifter division it were better to give those little ships a wide berth. Sometimes that could not be done, and with what tragic results in the Otranto Straits we shall soon perceive. Meanwhile, quite apart from their original employment, drifters up the Aegean were employed in so many ways—such as humble handmaids of the Army or on secret missions—that their work never seemed to ease up.

We shall come back to that subject later, but now we must follow the proceedings of another drifter flotilla which added new glory to the annals of seafaring.

## CHAPTER VII

### THROUGH THE STRAITS

**I**N those uncertain weeks, when fresh developments required important decisions to be made quickly, fleets and personnel would be collected from this base and that; a few hours later they would all have left the rendezvous and vanished below the horizon. Merely the despatch of a telegram, or a few words by telephone, completely altered the careers of ships and men. Thus, on August 30, 1915, when the Admiralty, in response to the Adriatic situation, ordered twelve more drifters from Poole, twice that number from Dover, and another two dozen from the Penzance-Falmouth area, the sixty were forthcoming as easily as if they were threescore of loaves. Let the little steamers be prepared for Gibraltar, but first let them assemble at Falmouth! In charge of this latest flotilla Commander J. O. Hatcher, R.N., was appointed, with Lieutenant-Commander M. E. Cochrane, R.N., as second, together with a number of young divisional officers from the Royal Naval Reserve.

The first mentioned had once served in the Merchant Service and entered the Royal Navy on the Supplementary List. At the beginning of the war he had been sent to the trawler base at Grimsby, where, by sheer personality, unlimited energy, and driving force, he always managed to extract order out of chaos and defeat any obstructionist. Lieutenant-Commander Cochrane had retired from service ten years before the war, but like many others had now come back.

On Monday, August 30, 1915, the latter happened to be stationed at Devonport, living ashore. He had just sat down to dinner when the telephone rang with much violence.

"Following telegram received from Admiralty: 'Lieutenant-Commander M. E. Cochrane appointed *Dreel Castle*. To proceed to Falmouth forthwith, without waiting for relief.'"

Just that! No explanation as to duties! Nothing said about *Dreel Castle*, or whither bound. The "Navy List" indicated her to be one of the "Auxiliary Small Craft," and that was all. But on ringing up the senior naval officer at Falmouth he further

learned that to-morrow a number of drifters were leaving for the Mediterranean, and that Commander Cochrane was sailing with them. Thus briefly warned, the latter packed his gear to go foreign, snatched three hours' sleep, and before 8 a.m. was in the train rushing across Cornwall. By 10.30 a.m. Falmouth had been reached, and then the few remaining hours were filled with concentrated activity. Sailing orders to be made out for each drifter; a carpenter to be sent aboard the *Remembrance* to knock up a bit of matchboarding that would serve as a cabin (since she, and not the *Dreel Castle*, was to be his particular ship), then a taxi drive around the town to lay in provisions and whatnots for over a week. It was a mad race against time, in eagerness to obey orders. Already at 1 p.m. the first seven drifters under Sub-Lieutenant Adams, R.N.R., steamed off down the harbour, past St. Anthony lighthouse; with cheers and a military band playing "Auld Lang Syne" to encourage them from the shore at Pendennis Castle. Five hours later Commander Cochrane's division of seven more shoved off, speeded by the same cheering, the same band, and the same tune.

No departure could very well have been more expeditious, but the humorous side of naval warfare showed itself from the moment he stepped aboard. Of luxury there was none, of essential comfort very little, though the carpenter had done what he could with hammer and saw. As to the fishermen crew, one glance sufficiently showed that this was a funny war anyway. No naval officer expected drifter men to be all smartness and spotless in their uniforms, but collectively the *Remembrance's* crew presented a severe shock to their new captain. "The skipper," Commander Cochrane tells me, "was distinctly 'oiled'; the mate was a man of sixty years, and wore a bowler hat; the cook was blind drunk in his bunk; and no one could find the frying-pan. I also discovered that of my personal fresh provisions six tins of condensed milk, two loaves of bread, two cakes, one lb. of butter, and thirty new-laid eggs had been stolen. The weather was rotten, blowing hard, with heavy rain squalls." Could any voyage have begun under less hopeful conditions? How different from life in battleship, cruiser, or destroyer!

Away plunged the drifters past the Cornish cliffs, and beyond the Lizard. Night settled down, Ushant was picked up on the right bearing, but at daylight of September 1 one of the seven could be seen nowhere: the *Lily Reiach* had mysteriously disappeared. Still, she would turn up again later, the *Remembrance*



had no coal to spare for chasing about the Atlantic, so the six pressed on. Let it be said in advance that each of these small steamers within a few short weeks was to improve beyond all recognition ; to render most brave and patient service ; whilst such crews as *Lily Reiach* carried were to crown their brave efforts in glorious death. The human material was of the best : this first week of September it needed only a period of polishing before it would shine with exceptional lustre.

Already the cook had shown himself a fine fellow, and the *Remembrance* a splendid, if lively, sea keeper. But the Bay of Biscay was in an ugly mood, the speed dropped to 5 and even 4 knots. "All day and night I lived in the wheel-house : I simply couldn't face my so-called cabin below, the matchboarding creaking like the noise of six Maxims firing. I tried to get a noon sight with the sextant, but failed badly. It was far too rough." Early next day, Friday, the division was calculated to have crossed the Bay, but nothing of the Spanish coast could be seen. The drifter *Union* (with Sub-Lieutenant Soames, R.N.R., in her) and the *Admirable* were not in sight to-day. At 10 a.m., however, the land revealed itself, as did Sub-Lieutenant Adams' division off Cape Villano, so they joined up with the senior officer. After passing those rocky, lonely, Burling islands short of Lisbon came the kindly warm weather, the brilliant sun, and the Portuguese trade wind which filled the drifters' sails.

Early on Sunday Cape St. Vincent, so familiar alike to Drake and Nelson, watched these rough fishermen float by over an oily sea, but during the night Trafalgar Bay repeated its treacherousness. A gale sprang up, and "really it was all we could do to get along. We shipped an enormous quantity of water, and on one occasion had to cut away the lower woodwork of the gunwale to let the water escape, as she was full up." Finally, however, on the seventh day out from Falmouth both divisions safely steamed into Gibraltar and began coaling. Next morning arrived the Penzance contingent, followed a few hours later by the Poole drifters, whilst Commander Hatcher's crowd came along on the 10th ; and so they were sixty.

Followed several busy days, during which the drifters were fitted with anti-submarine nets to submerge at 30 feet, and the dockyard did some work on those craft needing attention. There was time also to fit two of them—*Norlan* and *Clavis*—with accommodation less unsuitable for an officer, and to the latter Commander Cochrane transferred himself from *Remembrance*.

Then the drifter armada resumed its journey, with orders to reach Taranto, there to place themselves under Admiral Thursby. At noon of September 13 about thirty started off under Commander Hatcher, and next day Commander Cochrane followed with twenty-four, so that only a very few old crocks were detained in dock for longer period. It is, however, curious to note that, as in the case of Commander Turle's craft, the real defects manifested themselves not in the Atlantic but along the Mediterranean.

The wind and seas got up, decks leaked; the cabin of *Clavis*, still wet with new paint, was too uncomfortable for habitation and her captain had to snatch his sleep in a deck-chair within the tiny wheel-house. Then the *Maud Evelyn* developed some trouble and must needs be sent back into Gibraltar. Next the *Ocean Spray* got a hot bearing, so that the *Union* was detached to remain with her. Along the African coast the wind freshened lustily and the flotilla shipped much water. When speed gradually fell from  $7\frac{1}{2}$  to  $5\frac{1}{2}$  knots the procession seemed funereal. Several more units dropped out, but others rejoined as weather improved. Lieutenant H. C. Fry, R.N.R., in the *Floandi*<sup>1</sup> was having a busy time escorting the *Lottie Leash* and *Holly Bank*, since further engine anxieties had come to light; the *Union* still watched over *Ocean Spray* but also another named *The Prince*; whilst the *Golden Gift* and *Helpmate* were both temporarily missing. For the flotilla's senior officer, responsible as to their navigation and safety, life was one anxious routine by no means eased through the cook's supreme effort: a plate of eggs, fried out of all recognition to resemble pancakes, and covered with coal dust, does not cheer a delicate stomach.

On this same Sunday, whilst approaching the Sicilian coast, the *Clavis*' circulating pump went wrong, and for a while the *Speranza* took her in tow. Another drifter ran short of coal and had to replenish from the *Union*: it is not every day that open sea bunkering takes place, but fortunately the fine weather with an oily calm permitted this unusual proceeding. Finally, during the afternoon of Wednesday, September 22, eight days out of Gibraltar, Commander Cochrane's flotilla arrived at Taranto whither also Commander Hatcher's had come. Four British

<sup>1</sup> This name, contrary to its suggestion, had no Italian derivation. Drifters' appellations had always a homely origin, and this was a composite effort signifying domestic bliss: "Flo" (the skipper's wife) and himself. She was destined to create an enviable record in the Otranto Straits such as any battleship, cruiser, or destroyer might be proud to blazon. And this remark is not less applicable to the *Lottie Leash*.

battleships—Admiral Thursby's flag flying in the *Queen*—were still there with the Italian Fleet all under the Duke of the Abruzzi's orders.

So now there numbered fifty drifters, and the stragglers began to make their appearance on Sunday : the long voyage was over and they immediately were got ready for their special work, all of them being painted grey to lessen their visibility. As one looks back and compares dates it cannot be denied that these unprotected fishing vessels had remarkable luck. During the first half of their journey both Forstmann in U-39 and Gansser in U-33 were coming along down the Bay of Biscay at 10 knots, and might have fallen upon them at the western end of the Mediterranean. It would have been easy to have sunk the whole lot by 4.1-inch gunfire without using one torpedo ; and the moral result of such a disaster at that time of the war would have been terrible. But it so happened that during the boisterous hours before entering Gibraltar Straits Cochrane got rather too far south in his navigation. " I made Spatel and then stood up for Tarifa." Nevertheless he was off Gibraltar, speaking to the examination ship, about 1 p.m. of September 6. Forstmann, as was the custom of other U-boat captains, came through these straits in the dark hours so as to be on the surface and avoid the patrols<sup>1</sup> without being seen. He must have failed by little more than half a day to overtake Cochrane, but got through the Straits about 2 a.m. of September 7. By further fortune neither the Penzance contingent (which reached Gibraltar on the morning of the 7th) nor the Poole boats arriving on the 8th were attacked in the Atlantic by Forstmann or Gansser. The latter did not pass through the Straits till about 2 a.m. of the 9th, and ten hours later was fired on by Torpedo Boat 95.

It will be recollected that Forstmann and Gansser reached Cattaro on September 15 and 16 respectively, so that by the time they had spent a few days refitting they were ready to join their predecessors from Germany in a concentrated onslaught against Allied steamers, and at an area where targets were almost sure to be found. This area was at the remote south-western end of the Aegean, between Cape Matapan and Crete. It is a channel that is split up by the two islands Cerigo and Cerigotto, and along here would come the transports, munition ships, colliers, oilers, store ships, that kept alive the Dardanelles campaign.

<sup>1</sup> The Gibraltar torpedo-boats at this time patrolling the Straits were also made as invisible as practicable, being painted an extraordinary steel-blue colour.

Seeing that the Turks were so hardly pressed, how better employed could be the U-boats than to lie in wait for such steamers ? And how convenient was that channel, less than 500 miles from Cattaro, with wide, open sea when once clear of the Otranto Straits !

Apart from Hersing's sensational, but disconnected, attacks off the Dardanelles, and the casual incidents of the smaller submarines up the Adriatic, the Mediterranean U-boat war had not properly begun. As a strategic system, with a definite policy, it coincided almost with the advent of the Otranto drifters. Rücker and Kophamel, as we have seen, on September 4 inaugurated this new phase, and on September 8 Rücker had his first Mediterranean success against the French auxiliary cruiser *Indien*, whom he found at the island of Rhodes and destroyed by torpedo.

Now that U-boats 34, 35, 33, and 39 had arrived on their station it was time for Hersing's U-21 to lay up after her five strenuous months and have a protracted refit. She therefore went up to Pola dockyard at the end of September and did not return to active duties till January 22. Frequently were these boats seen, as would be natural, on the eastern side of the Adriatic, such as off Saseno Island, which was a good landfall when bound out or from the Cerigo area. By the latter part of September at least two of them were using the Greek island of Crete for obtaining supplies, and other isles were visited for the same purpose. Nor did they scruple to stop small Greek sailing vessels to get what they needed.

But obviously the essential consideration centred on the Otranto Straits, and now these were being patrolled along the line Otranto-Saseno Island by destroyers as well as light cruisers, assisted sometimes by armed merchant cruisers. Usually a couple of destroyers, and either one or two cruisers, were carrying out this duty at a time up to a distance of 10 miles from each coast, where ocean tugs moved about on watch. Around Saseno and Fano islands was to be the region for the drifters' initial efforts ; but the Italians sent out a dozen or more sailing craft, fitted with motors and concealed guns, to cruise about Corfu and up the Albanian coast as a kind of sea detectives. The idea was good, since the latter island came under particular suspicion ; but the sailing craft never made any valuable success, and before the middle of October a change was noted. No submarines had lately been observed in the neighbourhood, the Kaiser's

“Achilleion” palace had been abandoned and the German residents departed.

All this time that U-boats were passing through the Straits the anomaly still persisted of Italy not yet being at war with Germany, yet now our drifters were using an Italian base against the Germans ! It seemed to some minds a quite illogical situation.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE DRIFTERS' DIFFICULTY

**B**EFORE these drifters could settle down to their job, two modifications were introduced. At the Dardanelles such craft and the trawlers had done magnificent work, so that their services were indispensable: the Navy and Army alike had no praise too high for them, but more still were needed for additional labours. On October 1 Admiral Thursby released eighteen, which proceeded to Mudros: they were specially wanted for the protection of transports during the landing of Allied troops at Salonika. Thus the Adriatic netting flotilla immediately became seriously weakened.

The decision was further made that a better base than Taranto would be Brindisi, from which the drifters might work, and thither went the S.S. *Gallipoli* (late of the Puglia Line), which the Italian authorities had provided as a depot ship with accommodation also for Commander Hatcher, Lieutenant-Commander Cochrane, and others. The shift took place on October 5, when she came round from Taranto and was moored bows on to quay at the inner harbour, opposite the town. This was a convenient arrangement with space for drifters to be moored alongside each other in a similar manner. Adjacent to them on shore were fresh-water tank, carpenter's and blacksmith's shops, sheds for repairing indicator buoys, another for the floats, and one to store the mines. Here, during the time in harbour, the drifters could lay out their nets along the quay and get ready again for sea. The whole establishment became unofficially known as "Hatcherville." The Italians likewise provided a small auxiliary steamer, *Mazzini*, armed with three 6-pounders, in which Lieutenant-Commander Cochrane could periodically go out into the Adriatic to inspect the drifters, supply them with water, stores and mails; see that the boats were in their right positions.

Admiral Thursby, realising how large was the area to be covered by these fishing vessels, and that the Italians could provide very few destroyers as protection, took steps to have the

former armed so far as practicable. By the middle of October 50 per cent of the drifters had been fitted each with Nordenfelts of about 5 pounds. The wisdom of this precaution will shortly be noticed.

At Brindisi there was plenty of naval shipping, including four British light cruisers, several French and British destroyers. Ashore were a tennis club, music-halls, restaurants, the surrounding country being somewhat uninteresting, absolutely flat, with vineyards, olive trees, and cactus alongside the road ; but there would be little enough opportunities for the drifter people. Now within the first three weeks of arrival the latter were to learn that the Adriatic was neither an easy station nor without danger. Uniformly bad weather which comes at this time of the year, and in ancient days was the signal for Roman galleys to be hauled ashore into safe quarters till the spring, had greeted the drifters out in the Straits and lost them a few nets. But the proximity to Cattaro and the submarines' highway was bound to bring about some powerful drama.

During the first nine days of October the newly arrived U-boats had been fierce enough. In the Crete area they had sunk the French S.S. *Provincia* and the British steamships *Sailor Prince*, *Arabian*, *Craigston*, *Bursfield*, *Halizones*, *Thorpwood*, and *Apollo* ; whilst two others (*Novocastrian* and *Silverash*) had met a similar fate between 180 and 220 miles east of Malta. Then suddenly after the 9th there was a quiet spell, the reason for which we can now perfectly appreciate. At least one of the culprits—the ruthless Forstmann in U-39—was due to make his way back north to Cattaro, and of course he possessed wireless.

News of the drifters' arrival, with their tiresome nets, could not fail to have reached Cattaro, and on the 10th an Austrian aeroplane flew over the Straits, had a good look, and went home. Next day Lieutenant-Commander Cochrane in the *Mazzini* went out to inspect his craft at work, and learned from *Speranza* that three days previously a submarine had been sighted 12 miles south-west of Saseno Island going north. (Possibly this was Gansser in U-33.) The *British Crown* made the same report. Slipping his nets, the skipper of the latter chased after the enemy, fired a warning rocket, prepared to fire with his little gun, but the submarine dived.

Some suspicion was aroused at the sight of a three-masted schooner, but she turned out to be one of those previously mentioned Italian detectives. The night passed, and next forenoon

Cochrane completed the inspection, assigning the drifters to their respective spots ; when, at 1.30 p.m., he saw something unusual against the Albanian land to the north-east, and proceeded to investigate. Four drifters were bunched up together, stopped, with mizzen sails down. On reaching the group it was learned that about 8.30 a.m. this October 12, *Restore* (who had hauled her nets and was shifting berth), being now some 20 miles south-west of Saseno Island, sighted a submarine 5 miles off approaching on the surface. *Our Allies* was 3 miles away, *Union* and *Speranza* being some distance off but also on the scene, when *Restore* loosed off Very's lights and rockets. The enemy opened fire with his 4.1-inch gun, the first rounds dropping half a mile short, but soon they fell around *Restore*, *Our Allies*, and *Union* : altogether there were sent twenty or thirty shells. Coming closer, within 2 miles, the U-boat now struck *Restore* with a shell that exploded in the engine-room, filling it with steam and stopping the engines. The boat was launched, after both engineers were seen below lying stretched out and apparently dead. Then skipper and crew took to their boat.

Flying the Austrian ensign, the light grey U-39 now motored to within 100 yards of the *Restore* and sank her with two or three more shots. To-day we know that the foe was Forstmann going back to his nest, and this incident shows how very much the fishermen must be at the mercy of any U-boat who would keep at safe distance, well clear of the netting, and rely on his gunnery. The width and depth of the Straits were going to make the anti-submarine problem very difficult. More guns were required and more drifters, but whilst the former were mounted in every Adriatic drifter by the middle of November it was no easy matter to supply additional flotillas. At the Dardanelles Admiral de Robeck had no less than sixty-four trawlers and ninety drifters, yet now he asked for still others. But Admiral Thursby's request could not be denied, and on November 16 another forty more drifters were sent out from Falmouth.

*Restore* had no other weapons than her five rifles, whereas Forstmann was armed with two guns : the chance of surviving a fight under such conditions will not bear discussing, and at the time of assault she was 3 miles from the nearest of her sisters. *Union* and *Speranza* chased Forstmann till the latter dived into safety, whilst ahead of the latter (but hull down) could just be made out the presence of H.M.S. *Sapphire*. Another British light cruiser, the *Amethyst*, whilst patrolling with a destroyer



six days later had two torpedoes fired at her though fortunately both missed.

Every sign thus indicated that this blockade of the Adriatic might be efficacious in regard to surface ships ; but only with immense risks at the hands of underwater craft, whose comings and goings could not be thwarted. But the *Restore* disaster left behind no bad influence, no apprehension as to the future : all that the skippers asked for were a gun to each drifter. " Give us that—however small—and we can talk to the enemy in his own language." Thanks largely to the strong personality of Commander Hatcher, the discipline had been already raised to a high standard, and some day soon it would be manifested at a big crisis. Meanwhile the autumn gales were trying the crews severely. Whilst they could always run for shelter into Valona, this would mean weakening the anti-submarine watch, and it is to the credit of these British mariners that they never sought shelter till the very last moment.

At this period the Italians were fearing an attack on the right flank of their army advancing from Monfalcone. It was thought that the Austrian naval forces from Pola might slip out and do heavy damage, yet Italy had little faith that her own submarines could stop such aggression. Nor was this opinion far wrong, since the latter were so lightly built as to suffer damage in the Adriatic's rough seas : on November 1 two returned to Venice, having been unable to dive because of injured hydroplanes. But the British Navy were to help by sending north half a dozen of the " B " class submarines. Based on Venice under Commander Wilfrid Tomkinson, R.N., five of them had already arrived there before the end of October. If they likewise found operations difficult in the short steep seas among the Austrian and Italian mines, at least the B-boats stood it all better than those of their ally.

For the present the Adriatic situation was as if the rival sympathisers had resolved to stand aside and watch result being decided by bantam boxers. Whilst in fact the struggle had settled down to that between submarines opposed to destroyers and drifters, the light cruisers, on the other hand, were little more than a support. In theory the Allies' cruisers would enable the drifters to fall back at time of attack : in practice (as we just noticed) such protection was more likely to be far away and hull down. One thing was very certain : if ever the drifter net-line should become really effective, and a serious obstacle to Cattaro

U-boats, there would be an attempt by a fast squadron of Austrian cruisers to sweep the Straits. Such an exploit would require much preliminary staff work and based on up-to-date intelligence : the drifters' exact position, the selection of dark or light hours, the relative speeds of the contesting cruisers, the place and hour at which Brindisi's squadron was likely to be encountered after the assault—all this would demand meticulous labour. But would the sinking of a few drifters be worth the risk entailed ?

The reader will not have forgotten that H.M.S. *Dublin* had been at Spezia dockyard for the last four months. Her injuries had been such that she did not come back to Brindisi until the final day of October. Barely had a week passed than on November 8, whilst patrolling and zigzagging in the Otranto Straits, she sighted a periscope at 10-19 a.m. about 800 yards distant, just forward of the port beam. Here was one of those tantalising days, when fog comes down in patches and the eyes of look-out men are most severely tried. It would seem as if the enemy had long ago determined to wipe out this smart vessel, and his spies would have had no difficulty in reporting that *Dublin* was again working. But the cruiser certainly could not be caught off her guard. Engine telegraphs were immediately put " Full speed ahead," and the helm hard-a-starboard. Gunfire at the same time was opened on the periscope with the port 6-inch, and the tracks of two torpedoes seen. Only the good handling of the *Dublin*—the increased speed and swing of her stern away from the missile—prevented what seemed certain disaster. Both torpedoes passed clear under *Dublin's* stern, but four hours later she was again attacked. A month afterwards, whilst on her way to England (owing to boiler trouble), she had left Malta bound first for Gibraltar. It was December 14 and the time 1.50 a.m., when human nature is inclined to relax its vigilance ; yet the *Dublin* was very much alive. Near Pantellaria Island the lurking U-boat loosed a couple of silver fish, which happily were avoided.

That made the fourth occasion when she had been so attacked since joining Admiral Thursby's squadron, and a total of seven torpedoes had been used against her.

A submarine captain's life is often marked by disappointments ; just at the last second his target evades him. But some of his most anxious hours are when making a passage. Consider the problem as he heads for Cattaro after perhaps three busy weeks in the Mediterranean. For better protection he has elected to rush the Otranto Straits by night. Evidence would seem to show that

when bound north he picked up Cape Otranto light, which is very conspicuous at nearly 200 feet high, and then passed through the narrowest part at the nineteenth meridian, which is to say, rather over to the eastern side than in the centre—in fact, where *Restore* had been sunk. If Saseno light were still lit this would give him further confidence, after which it should be an easy run northward into Cattaro, making his two-letter call-sign on the way. What he never could be sure of was the exact position of the drifters from night to night, especially during those occasions when the latter were ordered to show no illumination. Before he could put his helm over, his propellers might be amid a medley of wires, and his ship at the drifters' mercy.

Thus did it happen about 8 p.m. on November 5 when apparently a U-boat ran into the *Maud Evelyn's* nets and found herself badly caught. Like a trapped whale, she made a great commotion in the water, and for about ten minutes towed *Maud Evelyn* to the south-west. Near by was another drifter, the *Felicitas*, and now the frantic submarine, in her efforts to get free, towed the first lot of nets into the second. It was, in driftermen's language, "a proper mess-up"; but with superior horse-power the U-boat (after *Maud Evelyn* slipped her nets and stood by to use her gun) had no difficulty in dragging *Felicitas* through an arc of 90°. The latter's skipper said that his own engines and rudder were of no avail.

There could be no doubt at the time of this being an enemy submarine, and nine indicator-buoys disappeared. When the "whale" appeared to have stopped, one of the drifters steamed over the place, dropping a depth-charge and two lance-bombs. Other drifters, summoned by rockets, came along, dropped more bombs, and during the next four hours cruised round the area. Nothing more was seen, and evidently the U-boat must have shaken herself clear and carried on home. It is quite definite she could not have sat on the bottom, since the depth at this spot reaches over 3000 feet. The night was very fine—ideal for netting—and the sea smooth. This episode having occurred in the area where *Restore* encountered her submarine; where only last week the *Lottie Leask* had her nets twisted up, whilst two other drifters each lost ten nets slightly to the north; it did seem as if we had discovered the submarine route.

Such an event had a most excellent effect on the fishermen: it suggested that before long they would be in luck. The Italian Commander-in-Chief at Brindisi, Vice-Admiral Cutinelli, had

promised £20 to each member of the crew whose drifter should sink a submarine ; so both *Maud Evelyn* and *Felicitas* on next emerging from Brindisi made a spectacular exit. Flying the " Jolly Roger "—skull and crossbones on black flag—with all hands lined up, the two vessels closed Admiral Cutinelli's flagship, cheering him loudly.

It is but fair to add that, after all, no submarine was trapped on that occasion. One week later the cause of the trouble revealed itself : " A sort of whale, black with white belly, about 30 to 40 feet long," was seen lying dead on the surface. The fishermen from the North Sea had proved that lance-bombs were more modern than harpoons !

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SUBMARINE PROBLEM

**T**HE autumn of 1915 saw a startling development, which had come not as a result of any sudden transformation, but rather as the sequel to certain events. The definite check at the Dardanelles, the failure to break through, convinced "Foxey" Ferdinand, the opportunist King of Bulgaria, that Germany must certainly emerge victorious from the Great War. He accordingly, on September 21, mobilised his army against Serbia.

One action leads to another, and it could not be supposed that this decision would fail to have its repercussions: so the Balkan complications made the Mediterranean problem more difficult, just at the time when U-boats were beginning their systematic attack. For some time past M. Venizelos, with statesmanlike prevision and promptitude, had foreseen the Bulgarian intervention but had also promised Great Britain and France, under certain conditions, the Greek Army's co-operation. Wherefore on October 5 came the first landing of Anglo-French troops at Salonika, the drifters who had been sent from the Adriatic laid their nets across the roadstead's entrance, and on the 12th arrived General Sarrail, bringing from France a brigade of infantry. Under such circumstances did the great Salonika sideshow have its beginning, and the intricate events commence.

Whilst Serbia, relying on the Bucharest treaty of 1913, looked to Greece for help, King Constantine could not be regarded by the Allies without grave suspicion: by reason of his domestic connection with Germany, and the number of pro-German nationals whose influence was anything but small, the Salonika situation seemed by no means sure. The Greeks could not be trusted, so the Allies must take over control of the port, the town, and local railway, otherwise the 46,000 French and the 20,000 British troops would be at the mercy of the doubtful Greeks, whose conscience could not be bothered by written obligations. But the firm attitude shown by the Allies during the first half of October, the determination to assume full charge, and entertain little

confidence for Greece ; the presence in the Aegean of such ample Anglo-French naval forces ; supplied just that amount of brusque intimidation which stopped any expression of duplicity. As to our sailors, wearied by long weeks at the Dardanelles, Salonika with its trams, its fresh provisions of vegetables, eggs, and fish, seemed far from unpleasant.

Less tolerable was the Serbians' lot. On October 10 their doom seemed to be certain, since at the north they were invaded by the Austro-Germans and Belgrade was captured ; whilst Bulgaria's army penetrated from the east. Thus by a swift succession of events the Serbian Army had but two alternatives : either it could surrender *en masse*, or make its retreat to the Adriatic. Seeing that already the Bulgarians had been able to interpose themselves across the way to Salonika, no assistance could be expected from the Aegean, and the historic but mournful march must now be made over mountains, along terrible roads, encountering every sort of physical hardship.

Meanwhile on October 16 Britain and France declared war against Bulgaria, and from 6 a.m. instituted a blockade, though any actual operations would be limited to Bulgaria's Aegean coastline. They opened on the 21st, when Captain (now Admiral Sir) Frank Larken in H.M.S. *Doris*, with another cruiser, *Theseus*, three monitors, the seaplane-carrier *Ben-My-Chree* and the drifters under Lieutenant-Commander Turle ; laying their protective anti-submarine nets ; proceeded to bombard Dedeagatch. This was the spot where the Salonika-Adrianople railway came down to the sea, and the only place of any importance along that portion of Bulgaria's coastline. The Russian cruiser *Askold* and the French *Kleber* were to demonstrate farther along.

Weighing from Mudros at 4.30 a.m. of the 21st Captain Larken, at a rendezvous off Samothrace Island, met *Theseus* and the four destroyers *Foxhound*, *Scourge*, *Grampus*, *Pincher*. Thence the squadron reached Dedeagatch at 1 p.m. The ships' companies having been to dinner early, the vessels cleared for action. Whilst the two British cruisers in line ahead approached their objective from the south-west, they were preceded by the destroyers sweeping for mines. At 6000 yards fire was opened on some new barracks westward of the town, where the Bulgarian soldiery scarcely seemed to expect hostilities.

It is true that the shells from monitors and destroyers bombarded the railway junction, locomotives, and rolling stock ; that by 5 p.m. the buildings along the sea-front had been reduced

to flaming ruins ; yet the actual value of this, as usually is the case when ships bombard the shore, cannot be highly regarded. And such was the Salonika situation, with the Allies' eternal nervousness in respect of the Greeks, that troops could not be sent eastwards and reap the benefit : the fear continued that when once sufficiently distant from their Salonika base, they would be treacherously attacked in the rear. The next crisis was when, to the north of Monastir, the Bulgarians on November 14 joined hands with the Austro-Germans : it seemed for a while as if the armies of the Central Powers were coming south until Salonika, and would sweep into the Aegean every one of the Allies' soldiers. That would have suited the Greek King excellently, but several other considerations were taken into account by our enemies : there would be serious difficulties for feeding the invaders, and the grand aim could be obtained by simpler means. That is to say, Bulgaria had been made perfectly content in that Serbia was now wiped out, and it would well satisfy the German higher command if the Bulgarians, by confronting the Anglo-French all the time, kept inactive thousands of the Allies who might have been employed at the Dardanelles or on the Western Front.

Thus a few weeks before Christmas there was the impending withdrawal from the Dardanelles to be faced ; the rescue of Serbia's tattered army to be planned ; and a double necessity imposed on our small craft for keeping the Aegean passages safe to Salonika Gulf on the north-west, no less than to Imbros and Lemnos at the north-east. This could not be easy amid the manifold archipelago. Very pleasant it was to be cruising through attractive channels and landing on the various islands, sometimes for information, sometimes for fresh food ; but when day after day and week after week went by with not one U-boat trapped, commanding officers found it difficult to keep the drifter-men's interest keen.

The Anglo-French landing at Salonika meant that for the next few years there would be targets a-plenty for submarines : every troopship and storeship would have to run much the same gauntlet, so that such narrows as the Doro Channel and the Cretan area would well be worth watching faithfully. Nor did that expert Lieutenant-Commander Kophamel delay his attentions long. By October 23 he had brought U-35 some 36 miles south of Salonika Bay when he sighted the British S.S. *Marquette* (7057 tons), carrying troops, nurses, and animals, northwards

from Egypt. Without any warning he torpedoed the ship, and she went down with the loss of 167 lives. This incident not unnaturally worried Admiral de Robeck, and that night he discussed the matter over dinner: it was decided to send forth a number of small craft under Captain A. W. Heneage,<sup>1</sup> who commanded the torpedo-gunboat *Hussar*. So, after hunting round the Gulf of Monte Santo, a ferreting scheme was tried north of Euboea in the Trikeri Channel. On the assumption that the Gulf of Volo was the hole where submarines hid themselves, three trawlers as ferrets were sent into that bight, whilst *Hussar* with another trawler watched the nets shot by four drifters across Trikeri Channel. Alas, this operation was no more fruitful than a second visit to the Volo Gulf on November 1, and to-day we know why.

Kophamel happened to be no longer on the west but on the eastern Aegean side. Having sunk *Marquette* he went across to the Gulf of Xeros, where Hersing, in U-21, had been wont to frequent. Kophamel now was ordered south to the port of Budrum, which is picturesquely placed on the Gulf of Kos at the south-west corner of Asia Minor. Beyond all dispute Budrum was being used by German submarine officers as a convenient minor base, not merely for supplies but also for embarking special Turkish missions. Its seclusion yet proximity to the Aegean shipping routes, whilst being in touch with Constantinople, gave it no little importance. Into Orak Bay, ten miles east of Budrum, von Heimburg, in UB-14, had come before sinking the S.S. *Royal Edward* on August 13. Somehow, in spite of rumours, we seem never fully to have appreciated how much Budrum meant. In April 1915 it was alleged that oil was stored there; wherefore on May 28 a small expedition of the French cruiser *Dupleix* and the British destroyer *Kennet* had a look at the place, the boat parties sent in being fired upon by the local Vali. Thereupon *Dupleix* bombarded Budrum for three hours, after which H.M.S. *Bacchante* arrived, who assisted *Kennet* to destroy the local shipping.

That, however, did not prevent all use of the port, which was to be most useful when embarking for north Africa. By example, in the early summer of this year UC-12 ferried across agents, arms, and money with the object of stirring up the Senussi. Certainly by the month of May the Turkish party in Tripoli under Nuri Bey had succeeded to the extent of making these Senussi

<sup>1</sup> Now Admiral Walker Heneage-Vivian.



unfriendly against Egypt. A very able Germanised Turk named Gaafer, with arms and money, had come over in April. By towing sailing coasters, a submarine could be the means of bringing quite an appreciable quantity, so that the May effort managed to land west of Sollum 50 Turkish and German officers, 60 machine-guns, and 6 field-guns—a very able effort. Here, again, our difficulty lay in far too many war-fronts and not enough ships. The Egyptian Coastguard could arrange for only a gunboat to visit Sollum once weekly, otherwise it meant withdrawing some of H.M. ships from the Red Sea, which was undesirable. H.M.S. *Cornwall*, however, whilst on her way from Zanzibar to the Dardanelles, spent the days May 24–27 searching the Sollum coast, but found nothing.

The first notable episode did not occur till August 16, 1915, when a couple of British submarines were sheltering from the weather near Ras Lick, on the coast of Cyrenaica. In response to signals from the shore, an officer and an engineer put off in a collapsible boat, whereupon the latter were treacherously fired at by the Arabs. The submarines' guns exacted punishment, and after casualties were suffered on both sides the incident finally closed by the Senussi's apologies. That autumn there arrived to patrol this area H.M.S. *Tara*, an auxiliary cruiser—one of those railway steamers which in peace-time normally ran from Holyhead to Dublin. Her real name was *Hibernia*, but on being taken over by the Admiralty this had to be changed, because of the battleship bearing that appellation. After spending the first war months patrolling between Ireland and Scotland it was a welcome change to gain north African waters.

Now on November 1, when H.M.S. *Hussar* and a trawler were in the neighbourhood of Volo Gulf pursuing a false clue, Kophamel had embarked ten German and Turkish officers at Budrum and started off for Bardia, on the north African shore. Astern he towed two schooners containing the heavy munitions, and the passage across could be done within four days. He then landed passengers and goods, but on the 5th had the good fortune, off Sollum, to sight the *Tara* which he promptly sank, the steamer foundering in 50 fathoms with the loss of twelve lives: seventy men, with her commanding officer, Captain R. S. Gwatkin-Williams, R.N., then were towed in their lowered boats by U-35 to Bardia in Cyrenaica, but on landing were captured by the Senussi, who held them prisoners. Next day Kophamel shelled Sollum (where a threatened garrison was holding out), sinking

at her moorings the Egyptian Coastguard cruiser *Abbas*, and considerably damaging a similar ship, the *Nur El Bahr*. This brief cruise by one of Germany's aces fairly shows the havoc to be wrought with determination and intellect. Kophamel, on getting back to the Adriatic, was made officer in charge of the submarine base at Pola, and he gave up his command of U-35 to Lothar von Arnauld de la Perière, who not merely sustained his predecessor's reputation, but raised it to dizzy heights. This exceptionally able officer was descended from one of the oldest families of France; and one of his relatives (himself a French naval officer serving in the Mediterranean area) longed for nothing better than the German U-boat captain's arrival as prisoner.

Apart from the direct results of Kophamel, the latter was indirectly to influence Egyptian strategy, for the Western Frontier posts were withdrawn to Mersa Matruh, which contained a suitable harbour within a night's sea journey of Alexandria, and we evacuated Sollum. Between December 1915 and March 14 of the following year operations against the Senussi continued, troops and stores being conveyed to Mersa Matruh by trawlers. H.M. sloop *Clematis* meanwhile patrolled the coast, and by her gunnery materially assisted operations. But the story of the Duke of Westminster's dashing armoured motor-car exploit on March 17, and the rescue of *Tara's* people from captivity, does not come within our purview.

Against Germany's "Big Six"—Hersing, Forstmann, Valentiner, Rücker, Gansser, and de la Perière—the Allies' Mediterranean strategy was feeble and ineffective. Well-considered tactics hardly existed, if we rule out the drifters: for the mistake of the North Sea was being repeated down south. Zeebrugge and Cattaro, Wilhelmshaven and Pola were the nests, and so long as they existed as such the main menace would remain untouched. It is notable that not once did Allied ships (of any kind) or nets cause destruction to enemy submarines within the Aegean area, yet it was not through lack of trying; rather it was because the Admiralty in those days were unduly optimistic concerning these traps.

Off such spots as Rabbit Island (just outside the Dardanelles entrance); off Samothrace, in the Gulf of Salonika; or the Doro Channel; a flotilla of eighteen drifters would each lay their half-mile of steel wire, with glass bottles or kapok to make them a floating curtain. Sometimes the drifters would then retire a dozen miles away, leaving watchers on the coast or perhaps some local

*casique* to give warning. Occasionally a net would get foul and sink, and spirits would rise, but we know from other sources that no U-boat had perished.

I suggest that always it will be a matter for regret that so much splendid personnel was not employed up the Aegean to the best advantage. Ninety drifters represented about a thousand keen men ; and no commanding officer than Admiral Turle, after living among them so many months, was better able to judge of these men. His praise is without stint. " You know," he writes, " how the first trawlers let down the Fleet when the Dardanelles were being attempted by force ? Well, these drifters wouldn't have ; they'd have gone anywhere, especially under those R.N.R. lieutenants. I have always regretted that these officers and men were not required for a final attempt to force the Dardanelles."

To the " Sniffs " (=S.N.F., i.e. Special Netting Flotilla) were entrusted innumerable small operations in the Grecian archipelago. The following narrative from the same source has some of the elements which might work up into a thrilling adventure story.

" I was told that the presence of an unofficial and suspicious wireless station existed on a certain small island : if it were not on the shore, there must be a submarine thereabouts, for the signals had been heard on three occasions.

" Having been told to investigate the island, I sent down four drifters, one of which was to make inquiries whilst the other three were to lie-off, and to come in only if necessary to do any rescuing. After dark the four approached this island. Three stopped at eight miles distant, whilst the other steamed to within a couple of miles and hoisted out two large dinghies. In them most of the crew rowed to leeward of the island, walked ashore, and all round the place.

" Then one of the explorers pressed his nose against a window, where the lighthouse-keeper lay on his simple bed. After ten minutes' interval when neither sound nor movement occurred, the fisherman shone his torch to make more careful search. Then was revealed the lighthouse-keeper, wide awake, and looking straight at the electric torch. With a scream he jumped out of bed, and fled to the top of the stairs. Perhaps to this day he is unaware that the 3 a.m. visitor did not come from one of the seven houses round the small harbour. No sign of wireless could be seen anywhere on the island, the party regained their boats, and an attempt at dog-barking near the harbour was silenced by large

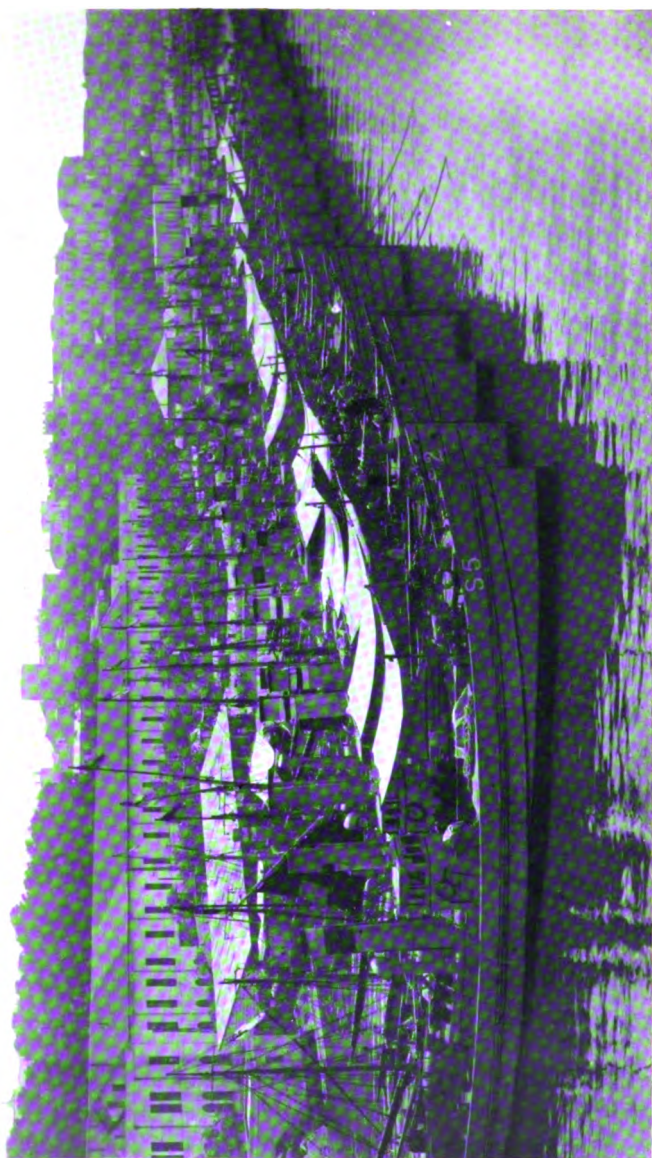
lumps of meat. Long before dawn the visitors were again rowed to leeward, and picked up their drifter."

It was ever an anxious period when such mammoth ships as the Cunard *Mauretania* or the White Star *Olympic* were due along the Aegean. By daytime the upperworks of these tall steamers could be seen for many a mile, enabling the U-boat captain to prepare his attack with leisure. The possibility of sending to the bottom a 46,000 tons liner seemed for him a happy contemplation. Now it was customary during the war for each submarine to have its own area, so that the commanding officer would become expert in that particular region. Whilst Gansser, for instance, normally worked the Malta district, Forstmann and Rücker looked after the Crete approaches. I should very much like to know if Rücker was operating off Cape Matapan on October 1, 1915, as seems so likely. For on that day a submarine tried to waylay the *Olympic*, whose superior speed enabled her to get clear. Pass over the intervening months, and we come to the early hours of May 12, 1918. The scene was forty-three miles west of the Lizard and *Olympic* came zigzagging at 22 knots, when U-103, whilst trying to torpedo her, was herself sucked in by the giant hull, one of whose blades ripped open the submarine. She foundered, but among the survivors was picked up U-103's captain. It was Claus Rücker, who formerly had command of U-34.



H.M.D. *UNION*

Skipper and crew of H.M. Drifter *Union*, which performed fine service at the evacuation of Durazzo.



BRITISH NET DRIFTERS  
In harbour after operating in Otranto Straits.

## CHAPTER X

### SERBIANS AND THE SEA

**T**HE unfortunate rout of the Serbians, and the new Salonika diversion, had brought about complications just at a time when the Dardanelles Dilemma reached its zenith. It will be recollected that in the middle of October Sir Ian Hamilton was recalled ; that a month later Lord Kitchener had come out to make a personal inspection of Helles, Anzac, Suvla ; that on November 23 the War Committee in London recommended evacuation. Thus everything seemed to be happening at once, but in different areas.

Early in November there was a brief interlude of hope for the stricken Serbs, but then the necessity of their being succoured, provisioned, transported, and reconditioned by the Allies became still more glaringly emphasised. Without such aid the former must be starved into wholesale surrender. Now this outlook—this realisation of fresh and difficult duties in the lower Adriatic—could not be accepted with any satisfaction just at a time when the submarines (Austrian and German alike) were showing increased activity. Unfortunately November indicated all too clearly that the Otranto Straits were alive with such traps.

On the 8th Lieutenant W. P. Parker, R.N.R., in the drifter *Manzanita*, found a submarine lying on the surface of the Straits stopped, so he fired at her from 2000 yards, compelling her to dive hurriedly. Next day the drifter *Bon Espoir*, about 9.30 a.m., similarly sighted a submarine on the surface, slipped nets, chased her for half an hour, fired nine rounds, and made the enemy dive into safety. On the following day (10th) at 4 p.m. Sub-Lieutenant Adams, R.N.R., in *Norlan*, shelled a U-boat ; and on the 11th at 3.45 p.m. the drifter *Our Allies*, whilst heading to the north-east and towing her nets, evidently trapped one of the above. For, suddenly, one of the buoys and the first three nets were seen to go under. Skipper W. B. Jenner started heaving in the warp, but could get in only half a net because of the weight. " I was steaming half-speed to try and hold the boat towards the north, but there was so much strain on the nets that it took



charge of the boat, pulling her broadside to wind and sea. I had made fast to the nets with the double part of 2-inch mooring-rope, and the strain on the nets pulled our boat down to the wash-strake." Finally, the rope had to be cut, and nothing further was seen, so that the enemy got away if somewhat scared.

I have seen a rough sketch made at the time by Sub-Lieutenant Adams, and there is no doubt whatsoever of his foe being one of those big-class, two-gun submarines that had voyaged out from Germany under their own power. Further evidence proved that at least one submarine was stationed 25 miles east of Cape Colonne, and it may interest the reader to learn that the Italians had two wireless land stations fitted with directional receiving instruments. The latter were so accurate that on one occasion after they heard a cruiser, when patrolling, signal a wrong latitude and longitude, the stations reported what they reckoned should be the cruiser's position, and eventually their report was found to be correct.

It is from their ascertaining that at 10.50 p.m. of November 15, and also three nights later, the *telefunken* of a German submarine was distinctly heard. Cape Colonne is at the southern extremity of the Taranto Gulf, and the position 25 miles eastward lies exactly on the route between Malta and Brindisi. One may thus infer that the enemy was reporting to Cattaro he had gained the allotted station for waylaying the French Fleet, should the latter come north into the Adriatic. Nor was such anticipation altogether unreasonable. At the middle of October Vice-Admiral de Lapeyrère, worn out after four years in command and especially fatigued by the last twelve months, was replaced by Vice-Admiral Dartige du Fournet. The latter, who had successively commanded a squadron off the Syrian coast and at the Dardanelles, settled himself at Malta, yet on December 13 he came across in the *Chateaurenault* to confer with the Duke of the Abruzzi at Taranto. To have torpedoed the French Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean would have been something of a U-boat victory. Moreover, whilst this flag-officer deemed it unlikely that the Austrian Fleet would emerge, he was desirous of placing some of his forces much nearer the Otranto Straits. Nor did many weeks elapse than a convenient opportunity arrived because of the Serbians.

As to the drifters belonging to the British Adriatic Squadron, they were still labouring and watching, but denied of any heartening results. Organised in groups of about eight boats, there would always be four groups at sea and one in harbour. Ten days



would be spent in the Straits, four at Brindisi, and the way these little steamers stuck to their job deserves considerable praise. During the third week of November the autumn gales were particularly bad, so that some of these North Sea skippers declared never had they experienced such fierce winds. Losses of nets from weather, submarines, and other causes, became a heavy item; in fact, sixty-six fleets of them had all disappeared since first operations across the Otranto Straits began. Strange warfare, indeed, that in spite of all those battleships in Taranto, the onus of operations should still be borne by Brindisi cruisers, destroyers, drifters. Farther north, at Venice, little could be expected to happen so long as the Italians regarded any naval strength here less for the purpose of attack than as some means of defence against possible raids from the Istrian peninsula.

Still, minor incidents would happen, as for example on the afternoon of November 11 when the British submarine B-11<sup>1</sup> had motored out from Venice to patrol. She saw an Austrian seaplane come down on to the surface, because of engine trouble, and alight only 500 yards away. The submarine seemed to have an easy target, opened fire with rifles and Maxim, but unhappily the latter's mechanism jammed after a few rounds. Using her petrol motors, B-11 next gave chase on the surface and tried to ram the seaplane, and this novel form of duel might have succeeded most interestingly. But those old "B" class submarines were wretchedly slow, so the seaplane for half an hour was able to manœuvre out of danger limit and then (with repairs set right) to take the sky and fly back towards the Istrian coast. A week later five Austrian seaplanes made a raid over Venice, dropping a couple of bombs in the arsenal, though the damage was very slight.

But it was the last week of November which foretold the important events about to burst forth. First there reached Brindisi a British Mission, including the British Naval Attaché from Rome, who were going across to Albania for the purpose of ascertaining the best method for sending up supplies to the Serbians. The former entrusted all their baggage and stores in four armed Italian motor schooners that lay alongside. Meanwhile the Italians had decided to seize, occupy, and fortify the Greek port of Valona.<sup>2</sup> This ancient, but almost stagnant, town on the

<sup>1</sup> This was the submarine in which Lieutenant N. D. Holbrook won his V.C. during December 1914, when he penetrated the Dardanelles Narrows and torpedoed the Turkish battleship *Messudieh*.

<sup>2</sup> On the southern point of the entrance to Valona Lake, Saseno Island, and along Valona Bay the Italians mounted one battery of four 4.7-inch, two batteries of 76 mm., and four anti-aircraft guns.

eastern Adriatic side, lies opposite Saseno Island at the entrance to the deep and spacious Valona Bay. It will be worth noting that its distance from Durazzo is slightly over 50 miles, that the latter is some 30 miles from San Giovanni di Medua which, in turn, was just 60 miles from the enemy's base at Cattaro. Already on November 22 Italy sent across the guns, and two days later the first batch of mines. The British drifters were likewise despatched for the purpose of laying their nets off Valona Bay's entrance, and in short a convenient haven should be ensured, sheltered from northerly winds, though north-westers and south-westers would raise a troublesome sea.

Obviously the Austrians from Cattaro had no intention of allowing these startling proceedings to pass without attention, and several of the former's mines were at once discovered off Saseno Island. The enemy must also have heard that trains bearing several thousand tons of provisions for the Serbians had reached Brindisi, that these supplies were being shipped aboard steamers which would transport the cargoes to San Giovanni di Medua and Durazzo. Each of the latter (as we saw in an earlier chapter) was an open harbour: neither possessed facilities for unloading, and both were unprotected and dangerously near to Cattaro. By November 23 *Norlan* and four other drifters had shot their nets in the Linguetta Channel, whilst the rest under Lieutenant-Commander Cochrane moored theirs from Saseno Island eastwards to the Albanian shore. Fortunately it was kindly weather: bright sunshine and a flat calm. But that very night the enemy came along raiding.

For such a purpose he naturally chose from his fastest units, viz. the new 27-knots scout *Helgoland* (3500 tons), four destroyers, and six torpedo-boats. Coming down to the Straits he had no difficulty in sinking two of those schooners (one containing grain and another carrying the Mission's luggage); whilst a submarine fired two torpedoes at a steamer in San Giovanni di Medua—fortunately not hitting. The enemy then got away home safely. As to the Mission, whose object was to see that supplies reached the Serbian Army by the best route, they had crossed the Adriatic by Italian destroyer; but on landing at San Giovanni found themselves without any possessions other than what their backs carried. During all these anxious times British and Italian officers worked together moderately well, though the latter sometimes in their lack of enterprise, excessive caution rather than daring, seemed to rouse disappointment,

As seamen, the Italians had something to learn from their blonde visitors.

The language difficulty was inevitable on both sides. You can imagine that when a drifter came in with mechanical defects, and her very Scotch engineer tried explaining the technical details to an Italian, little advance could be made. Similarly one day a senior British naval officer had been talking to an Italian naval officer concerning the movements of ships. Concluding, he remarked : " You see, some are this and some are that . . . etc." The Italian had listened intently, yet apparently without comprehending one word. Judge, therefore, of the electric effect on the British bystanders at hearing him reply in his slow, nasal drawl : " Veree nize in zummer ! "

Actually about this time the Italian weather had turned bitterly cold, and at Brindisi it was snowing hard—a sight there almost unprecedented. Thus on the last day of November did the Serbians begin their retreat through Albania, whilst Italian transports were about to take more than 30,000 soldiers across for the occupation of Valona that in about a week had been made so secure. The pity continued that this military force could not have been employed in the capture of Cattaro, but at any rate they would prevent the Central Powers from conquering the whole of Albania. Carrying 5000 men, horses, artillery, etc., the first four Italian transports left Taranto about 5.30 p.m. on December 1. They were escorted by an auxiliary cruiser, a light cruiser, eight destroyers, and arrived off Cape Linguetta at 5.30 next morning. Two hours later saw them safely anchored in Valona Bay.

For a few days, then, there devolved the two separate duties of (1) landing Italian troops at Valona, and (2) continuing to bring stores for the Serbians into San Giovanni. Thus the enemy was in for a busy time, and even on December 1 one of his submarines might have sunk the Italian supply steamer *Epiro* on her way towards San Giovanni had not H.M.S. *Weymouth*, her escort, sighted the waiting U-boat 11 miles south-south-west of Cape Rodoni, gone for her at full speed, fired, and made her dive. Two days later another submarine was sighted by H.M.S. *Topaze* and the Italian destroyer *Ardente* in the Gulf of Drin (which includes San Giovanni di Medua). The enemy fired two torpedoes but both missed.

We have already noted how disappointing to our officers was the Italian attitude in regard to Pelagosa and Lagosta ; but the

same lack of preparation and organisation characterised the expedition to Valona. During the crossing on the night of December 1 the squadron had been ordered to proceed at 12 knots. In the centre was the auxiliary cruiser *Citta di Catania*, astern of her in single-line-ahead being the four transports, who were screened on the port side by the 29-knots cruiser *Quarto* with four destroyers, and on the starboard side by four other destroyers. So bad was the station-keeping, however, that the last mentioned were never seen throughout the night after the first half-hour. In spite of the clearness of the weather and the moon's illumination—ideal conditions for attack by enemy submarines—unnecessary lights were being shown aboard the transports. To-day we know that three enemy submarines had been located by their *telefunken* during this first day of December between Brindisi and San Giovanni. Whilst this line was farther north than the transports' track, it should have suggested the need of every precaution.

When the squadron arrived off Cape Linguetta at daylight it was noticeable that these transport steamers were out of position, the last one being about 5 miles away. Of the eight escorting destroyers, six were considerably scattered (one of them being fully 4 miles from the last transport), and in truth nothing could have prevented a submarine from wiping out these first 5000 troops, with their 500 horses and mules, 60 head of cattle, and a month's stores. Lucky for them that whilst the German aces were busy with their Mediterranean campaign against Anglo-French shipping, the smaller submarines were at this time more concerned with making perilous the San Giovanni approaches!

The manner of disembarkation at Valona struck the British mind as very slow and unenergetic, no one seeming to take much interest. Few of the military officers wore marching boots, some had elastic sides, and others the thinnest of black kid boots. No senior officer was present at Valona to supervise the landing, but in short the whole operation from start to finish remains a lesson in mismanagement and want of forethought. Fortunate were these soldiers that they had not been called upon to scale the Gallipoli cliffs in the face of violent Turkish opposition!

I have stressed these items to prepare the reader for what follows, and it will now scarcely surprise him to observe how casual was the Italian attitude in regard to mines which the enemy had laid between Saseno Island and Cape Linguetta at the approaches to Valona Bay. When at dawn of December 2

this first contingent arrived off Cape Linguetta, the senior officer did not know the mine-field's position and hailed a patrolling torpedo-boat, the latter replying that a course should be kept close to the Cape : and this vague information was all that prevented the squadron from foundering on unseen dangers. What then could be more natural than that the second contingent's arrival should be a tragedy ?

It was 10.30 a.m. of December 4, the weather being fine with a light south-west wind, when two Italian transports (of whom one was the *Re Umberto*), escorted by destroyers and torpedo-boats, were seen making for Valona Bay by the same channel between Saseno Island and Cape Linguetta. The first transport steamed through with safety, but when the *Re Umberto* got within a quarter of a mile of the Cape she struck a mine and quickly began to founder. Now the two drifters *Evening Star* and *Lottie Leask* happened to be near and saw what happened. They immediately slipped nets and hurried alongside the sinking troop-ship, regardless of danger. Throwing ropes aboard the latter, the fishermen managed to save 500 Italian soldiers, and held on till lines had to be chopped away just before the steamer in ten minutes finally disappeared. These survivors, crowding the decks, were hurried ashore to Valona, whilst a few other soldiers were picked out of the water by Sub-Lieutenant Adams, R.N.R., in the *Norlan* and several drifters who had been farther off. About 100 Italians were drowned.

At the moment of this incident Sub-Lieutenant H. C. Fry, R.N.R., in the drifter *Manzanita* was engaged distributing ammunition to the drifters at their anchored nets when he heard the big explosion and hurried thither, only to find that the job of rescuing had been completed. But he was still steaming among the wreckage looking out for any other survivors, when a second detonation occurred at 1.30 p.m. Heading towards Cape Linguetta, the 30-knots destroyer *Intrepido* (613 tons) had only just rushed past *Manzanita* when this Italian struck a mine likewise. At once Fry headed for her full speed, and within ten minutes had got alongside, taking off part of the crew, all the wounded, including her captain (Commander Leva). Not merely this, but the little drifter kept her engines going slowly ahead and gently pushed the *Intrepido* on to the shore, when a gangway was put out and the uninjured were able to walk off, after which *Manzanita* took the wounded into Valona. By this excellent bit of work both destroyer and her people were saved.

It so chanced that Commander Leva was married to an Englishwoman, and the rescue by a British drifter came fittingly ; but nothing till to-day had so deeply impressed the Italians in regard to our auxiliary craft. The promptness, the disregard of anything save duty, the whole-heartedness and quiet efficiency of these officers, skippers, and men were quite unforgettable. To Admiral Thursby came a letter from H.R.H. the Duke of the Abruzzi thanking the three net drifters, whilst later on Admiral Cutinelli sent the sum of 3000 lire to be distributed among them.

The enemy, relying on sound information, had made no mistaken operations. He had sent out that submarine UC-14 (fabricated in Germany and brought by rail to Pola) which laid her mines off Cape Linguetta on November 26, and repeated this effort on January 4 with similar success.<sup>1</sup> Just as the first ambush needed only a few days before bringing about results, so did the second lot of "eggs," and the wonder is that the Italians suffered so few losses. But equally well directed was the Austrian determination to thwart supplies reaching the Serbs, who were beginning to reach Skutari and Elbasan. How unsatisfactory for this purpose were both San Giovanni di Medua and Durazzo no one better than Admiral Thursby appreciated.

During the first week of December one small steamer had been sent across which unloaded her cargo and got back safely to Brindisi ; but a second, which had gone across on the 4th, had discharged her goods at San Giovanni only to find her return denied. The problem was that, apart from this and Durazzo being open to gales and lacking the requisite facilities, no guarantee could be made against sudden enemy surprise, whether by surface ships or submarines. It was impossible to station an Anglo-Italian force, cruising as a barrier, somewhere between one of these ports and Cattaro during the time the steamer emptied her holds. What size should be this force ? If small, then the Austrians need only send against it something more powerful. But more numerous as the Allies' squadron might be, so more targets would be offered to the submarines. In short, whilst these food ships could generally be escorted across, it was not practicable to keep an armed force waiting about at sea.

For on the night after that December 4, which developed so unhappily for Valona, the Austrians again did the right thing. We saw on November 23 the *Helgoland* with her destroyer screen came forth and destroyed a couple of schooners. At

<sup>1</sup> See below.

8.30 p.m. of December 5 this fast scout, together with the armoured cruiser *Sankt Georg* (7185 tons and 21 knots), as well as seven or eight large destroyers, left Sebenico (now called Sibenik)—that splendid Dalmatian harbour which consists of a narrow basin surrounded by high land, a kind of Cattaro on a smaller scale.

Sweeping down the Adriatic, they had not the luck to find supply ships crossing from Brindisi, but on looking into San Giovanni di Medua in the early hours of the 6th they bombarded the port, sinking the above-mentioned steamer which had been sent over on the 4th, destroying likewise the Greek S.S. *Thyra* which had come with ammunition for Montenegro. A number of small craft were also sunk both here and at Durazzo. Typical of the prevailing delay was the fact that though the *Thyra* had been safely escorted to her anchorage by H.M.S. *Topaze* and the Italian destroyer *Ardente*, this steamer with her valuable cargo of guns and stores had lain there for twenty-four hours without having been unloaded.

A further unfortunate affair arose through one more French submarine coming to grief. At this date two of about 390 tons were doing a special vigil. Off Cattaro the French submarine *Cugnot* was stationed on what seemed certain to be a lucrative patrol. Surely she could not help hitting at least one of the cruisers? But lately the raids had been started not from Cattaro: Sebenico had been more favoured. Wherefore the *Cugnot* waited in vain and saw neither *Helgoland* nor any of her squadron. Now as some defence against the Austrian bombardments of San Giovanni, there had also been sent the French submarine *Fresnel*. On the night of the 5th-6th she was only 10 miles to the north-west of San Giovanni, viz. where the River Boyana comes out. This waterway is navigable nearly up to Skutari, but the mouth is subject to considerable change after heavy autumn rains, and the tricky bar at this date had about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet of water. It is just the sort of place where a submarine, amid local currents and shoals, might speedily find herself in difficulties. Somehow, off this Boyana mouth the *Fresnel* managed to get ashore, and the *Helgoland* squadron sealed her fate by destructive gunfire. To-day we know that the French crew then landed at a small island in the Boyana delta, and with their rifles defended themselves against the enemy's cutter which had been sent to take them off. Subsequently, however, the cutter returned with a Maxim, so that the Frenchmen were captured.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE RAIDERS COME OUT

**B**Y December 11 the last of the Italian troops had reached Valona, and thus one big anxiety was removed for a while.<sup>1</sup> Every available cruiser and destroyer from Brindisi could now protect the convoys bringing the Serbian supplies into Durazzo. Two steamers with about 700 tons of stores were landed there on the 13th, and others began to follow as rapidly as the blustery wet weather allowed. San Giovanni di Medua's small harbour at present was so blocked with vessels sunk by the Austrian squadron during the night raid of December 5-6 that supplies could not be sent through here too easily, but in a few days small steamers managed to work their way inside, and it was decided to let the wrecks remain: the latter might even hinder the U-boats.

At this date the problem seemed full of complications, and the solution anything but clear. Just this was certain: the Serbian Army, the accompanying refugees, and the thousands of prisoners captured from the Austrians must be kept alive, fed, and removed into safety, no matter what the enemy's raiders, mine-layers, and submarines might plan. That is to say, the King of Serbia, the King and Queen of Montenegro, the two respective Governments of these stricken countries, and the diplomats; 12,000 women, children, and wounded, 131,000 Serbian troops, 25,000 Austrian prisoners; were to rely on the Allies for delivery from death. The captives, especially, were suffering from starvation, fatigue, and cholera: they should be the first to reach the concentration camp which the Italians had organised about 10 miles outside Valona.

Even to-day, when motor traffic is beginning to make the Balkan region slightly less remote from western European civilisation, roads are all too few; but in those days land travel

<sup>1</sup> Somewhat late in time the Italians began mine-sweeping off Cape Linguetta, following their two disasters; elementary prudence would have suggested that this should have taken place immediately before the troopships' arrival rather than after. As a result of 48 hours' enforced delay in the transport time-table four more mines were swept up ere the third contingent reached Valona.



was more primitive still, and the Italian soldiers had to begin making the road from Valona to Durazzo, besides repairing others. One may assign December 1 (when the British Adriatic Mission got out of the train at Brindisi) as the date of the first efforts towards the Serbians' evacuation. Rear-Admiral E. C. Troubridge,<sup>1</sup> head of the British Naval Mission to Serbia, found the conditions at San Giovanni di Medua bad enough to break the heart of anyone accustomed by ancestry and training to seamanlike order, to say nothing of simple cleanliness. Happily Serbs, Montenegrins, and Italians alike, so unconditionally entrusted him with their confidence that on December 19 he was given charge of this port and set to work evolving some order out of utter chaos; but every imaginable worry, from every possible angle, seems to have been his hard lot during those anxious days whilst waiting till the Austrian prisoners could first be removed. The following letter, which he wrote on December 23 from San Giovanni to a friend in Italy, has a pathetic appeal:

"We are awaiting the arrival of a ship with provisions for the Serbian Army. . . . We have been out of the world since we began our 70 days' retreat from Belgrade to the Adriatic. This place [San Giovanni] is in a bad state: hundreds of Serbian refugees, and now the Italians refuse to accept them. No food, no houses. All are camping in the open and half starving. God knows what is to become of them all. It is a monstrous foolishness of the Serbian Government to allow them all to come here, but all control is gone: no authorities anywhere. I have assumed command of everyone here, and am endeavouring to get some sort of order into the place, but enemy submarines are off here daily and we are always expecting bombardment and destruction as so close to Cattaro, and the Serbians will not move their wing to the south. And indeed the road to Durazzo is practically impassable with the recent rains. It was a pleasure to see the sea again after one year and after our long trek from Belgrade, and will be a still greater pleasure if I see Brindisi and civilisation, as all is up with Serbia and our utility is I fear gone now."

In this sad epistle, written two days before Christmas, the Admiral modestly concludes that if a box of cigarettes could be sent him they would be "priceless": yet, I think, the most human touch of all is the joy of the traveller back again at the

<sup>1</sup> We last saw this flag-officer leaving the Adriatic, but he had since been back to England and in Serbia.

water's edge. "Once a sailor, always a sailor!" No admiral could ever fail in his sensitiveness to shipping and all that it connotes.

The Italians certainly wasted no time in regard to the Austrian prisoners, whose evacuation began on December 14. Two nights later the first batch had been sent aboard their two transports *Dante Alighieri* and *America* bound for Sardinia. The French Government assisted with three other steamers for the same purpose, and during the first fortnight no fewer than 17,000 wretched warriors had passed through Valona for the same distant captivity. Finally by the first week of January the remainder had departed likewise, except for those hundreds whom cholera seized just in time for death's demand. All was now ready for the operation of removing Serbian refugees and the Army, yet some inevitable delay arose because the above transports must go into quarantine; and meanwhile a keen race against time had been started. Would the Austrians sweep into San Giovanni and Durazzo before these weary, dolorous Serbs had been allowed to depart? Just as the old year ended Durazzo was being fortified with anti-aircraft and light 87 mm. guns to protect a mine-field that had been laid off there against enemy attack; but the whole atmosphere was full of sadness and uncertainty. No one dared look with hope beyond the present suspense.

Meanwhile the drifters right away from early December till well into February were to be engaged on adventures that were exceptionally arduous and hazardous, but not less miscellaneous. Maids of all work, loyal to their duties, never shirking the riskiest jobs, they created a wonderful record for others to follow. At one time they would be protecting supply steamers bringing food for the hungry Serbians; then they would set to work in rescuing the latter; or they would with their nets lay a safe corridor from place to place; but occasionally some sudden incident would summon drifters and crews to the next world. There seemed no respite, even after ten days bucketing about at sea. Perhaps they had barely got back into Brindisi than some new phase had been wirelessly, so there would be just time to coal and off the drifters steamed once more.

By the latter part of December no fewer than thirty-five of the forty additional drifters being sent out from England had reached Brindisi and were fitted with guns, so that on patrol at one time there might be not less than fifty-four; yet every single one

would be needed for the impending evacuation. The slowness of these small vessels certainly enabled them to require but little fuel, and thus they could keep the sea for comparatively long periods. Exactly the opposite was it with the Italian destroyers patrolling. Their high speed permitted them to remain out during not more than thirty hours, though the French destroyers had longer endurance.

All this time the cat-and-mouse hostilities between drifter and submarine never really stopped, though quiet interludes occasionally came as variations to the theme. At 8 a.m. on December 5—that is to say twelve hours before the *Helgoland* raiders left Sebenico for Durazzo and San Giovanni—the drifter *Hollybank* sighted one of the big German U-boats astern of her nets. The enemy was bound north for Cattaro from the Mediterranean and a duel of artillery commenced. The U-boat at a distance of 1300 yards fired some thirty-five rounds from at least two guns, and *Hollybank* (who was not hit) loosed off twenty rounds: the third and nineteenth falling very close to the German, who finally took a dive. He was tired and wanted to get home, but some other day would fight these little steamers.

Now, from the proud German naval officer's point of view, there was something almost insulting that British fishermen should spit at him so boldly and cause annoyance with an inferior single gun. This sort of thing, and the tiresome nets, must be ended by heavy intimidation, wherefore the sequel occurred a fortnight later to the drifter *Lottie Leask*. She left Brindisi at 10.30 a.m. of December 18 and, just when darkness was falling, had arrived some 20 miles west-north-west of Saseno Island, the spot being exactly on the line which connects Cattaro with the position where *Restore* had encountered her U-boat on October 12. The inference is that U-boats did make a habit of steering North (magnetic) when bound through the Straits towards Cattaro, and at a distance of 20 miles took their navigational departure from Saseno Island, which is 1087 feet high. Its two conical hills (suggesting at that range two separate islands) would make excellent marks. That drifters should operate this locality athwart the submarines' track greatly irritated the Germans.

Suddenly out of the half-light *Lottie Leask* found herself attacked by two U-boats: one on the starboard bow and another on the quarter. After five shells had struck her she began to sink and the crew took to their boat. Throughout the night they continued to row about, and at 7 a.m. sighted the Albanian coast,

which they reached at 2 p.m., landing at one of the numerous sandy beaches which characterise that littoral ; for it would be no unfair description if we summed up the scenery north of Valona as comprising sand, marshes, intersecting rivers against a background of mountains. Along the lonely plain they wandered, till at dusk they came to a shepherd's hut, outside which they settled themselves for the night and resumed their journey in the morning. Still tramping, they encountered a shepherd at 4 p.m., who took them to a monastery where they were kindly welcomed, being given food and a room. That seemed pretty good, until they found also two Austrian officers and a soldier, who were overheard to say something about interning the drifter men ; so the latter decided to leave, walked on all night through the swamps, and retained their liberty. Next day was the 21st, which they spent always marching, spending the night asleep on the hillside ; but on the 22nd they met some Italian soldiers who gave them biscuits and showed them the way to an Italian camp. After quitting the latter at daybreak, they came to a second camp, and finally marched with 100 Serbians till Valona was gained, and at 8 p.m. got on board the S.S. *Myrmidon*, a transport, where they lived several days. Finally on December 28—ten days after *Lottie Leask's* loss—they reached Brindisi, where everyone marvelled at the strangeness of the fishermen's story. Whether the skipper was correct in thinking there were two submarines rather than one may be debated : actually he never saw the stranger until after the abandonment, when the U-boat came between drifter and boat. The light being so poor, the drifter could only fire five rounds in the direction whence the enemy shells came forth, and it would seem more likely that this U-boat was alone, who now resumed her voyage unhurt.

Italian troops from Valona had advanced up the coast so far as Durazzo, and some of the refugees had been brought across to Brindisi ravenously hungry, with sad stories to tell of two months' ceaseless retreating—scarcely one day or night when they had not walked. But the Italian authorities, fearful of typhus (one man having died in the steamer), refused to allow them anywhere in the town—neither in the shops nor the railway buffet. King Peter had crossed in a destroyer and left Brindisi with scarcely anyone being aware, and at this port arrived also the French General Mondésir, who was to take over command of the Serbian Army. He and his staff crossed to San Giovanni di Medua for the purpose of organising the Army's evacuation.

Now it was on December 29 that the inevitable happened, and the Austrians essayed with firm hand to interfere with the evacuation. Their choice fell not on San Giovanni di Medua, nor on Valona, but upon Durazzo. Sooner or later surface ships rather than submarines must come out from Cattaro, make a quick raid, and scuttle back into port. If by this excursion any of the transports could be destroyed either in harbour or en route, it might upset well-considered plans; light cruisers and destroyers patrolling Otranto Straits must be withdrawn for escorting transports full of Serbian soldiers, and thus the U-boats would find their passage to or from the Mediterranean less impeded than ever. On the other hand, the enemy realised that a raid is a risky undertaking, that speed is of the first importance, and the slightest element of chance may cause a clash with superior forces. Anything might happen, but the combination of speed with cool courage and luck most likely would bring about a desirable result.

Obviously this was a job for one or more light cruisers escorted by modern destroyers, wherefore the new scout *Helgoland* (27 knots) and five *Tatra* class 800 tons destroyers, able to steam at over 30 knots in smooth water, were selected. Captain Seitz of the *Helgoland* was one of those fearless leaders exactly suited for this kind of adventure. The possibility of death did not appal him, and it was gossip among the Austrian sailors that he even wished to die. Partly because of his dashing character, partly because *Helgoland* was slightly faster than the other two 3500 tons scouts, he was generally relied upon when raids were contemplated.

On the night of December 28, between 11 p.m. and midnight, picture this squadron of six putting to sea from Cattaro, taking the following formation: one destroyer ahead of *Helgoland*, two on the latter's starboard side, and another pair to port. The names of these escorts were *Balaton*, *Czepel*, *Tatra*, *Lika*, and *Triglav*. Until about 2 a.m. the squadron steered various courses, the night being clear, starlit, and at this time the new moon just rising when an alarm was given and all hands were sent to general quarters. For to the south of Cattaro the French submarine *Monge* was patrolling, whilst her sister the *Archimède* operated to the north. It was the former which had suddenly been sighted, and caused some excitement.

Each of these submarines when below the surface was driven by electricity, but *Archimède* on the surface relied on steam engines, for which purpose a funnel was fitted. During the first autumn of the war France sent the *Archimède* to serve under

Commodore Keyes at Harwich, and a British submarine officer who went in her to the Heligoland Bight has given me details of the amusing, though anxious, hours which were endured.<sup>1</sup> The disadvantages of a steam-driven submarine then revealed themselves all too plainly. Before diving the funnel had to be telescoped and covered over, but bad weather came on which knocked the funnel out of its guides and it could not be lowered. This in turn meant that its watertight hatch could not be closed, and the *Archimède* could not submerge ; she was, for all practical purposes, just a small surface ship. But when the sparks spurted from the funnel, together with dense masses of smoke, and clouds of steam were given out every time a sea struck the red-hot steel funnel, *Archimède* fairly advertised her presence far and wide. Invisibility was the least of her virtues, and after managing to reach Harwich she returned to Cherbourg as scarcely suitable for North Sea work.

The prejudice of British naval officers against steam-driven submersibles was seen to be justified after we had introduced these engines in our " K " class craft : no fewer than nine boats being so ill-fated as either to founder (with the loss of lives) or receive other serious damage. Although even in peace time the French suffered serious accidents, their faith in this type still continued unshaken well on into the war. By a curious coincidence *Archimède*, on this same day that Captain Seitz came forth, had been able to sink an Austrian steamer making towards Cattaro, but was chased by destroyers, and an explosion caused her to leak in the conning-tower, though she managed to get across the Adriatic to the Italian port of Barletta.

Less lucky was the *Monge* to be sighted on the surface by the *Balaton*, who focussed her searchlight on the dark object and lit up the submarine's conning-tower so that the latter showed itself very clearly. Whilst the rest of Seitz's squadron stood off, *Balaton*, from a distance of several hundred yards, fired seven rounds and then rammed *Monge*, which finally sank. Most of the crew were picked up by *Balaton*, who placed them aboard *Helgoland*. That was the first in the series of events, and demonstrated at least one of the raiders' perils.

So the night passed, and by daylight the squadron arrived off Durazzo. They had not the experience to fall upon some transport, nor to be inconvenienced by any destroyer or cruiser patrols. Had the Austrians continued their voyage to the south, they

<sup>1</sup> For complete account see Chapter VIII of my *Amazing Adventure*.

could have destroyed any of the drifters and then hurried back to the north ; but that was not part of their plan. Despite the information possessed, apparently they were unaware that the Allies had laid mines not merely off San Giovanni di Medua but also off Durazzo, and that guns had been landed at Durazzo to protect the mine-field.

Apart from a 2-fathom patch ; Durazzo Bay has an average depth of about 5 fathoms. Captain Seitz, whilst waiting outside in the deepest water, sent in his destroyers, who fired several rounds against the one steamer seen to be at anchor off the town, and she was sunk without difficulty. To this assault the shore batteries replied, and the destroyers came back towards *Helgoland*, who now approached as near as she dared, with the object of using her 3.9-inch guns against Durazzo's batteries. In order not to mask the cruiser's fire the destroyers turned seaward, but with fatal sequel ; they were right amidst the mines.

Experience in various theatres of the war showed that frequently the bow-wave of a vessel would push aside the mine, but the suction aft would draw the danger quickly towards the stern. Thus *Lika* in exploding the first mine damaged only her rudder, which became jammed hard over. For a few moments she was rushing around, out of control, and resembling a dog chasing its tail. The crew were inclined to panic, but remained at their stations, yet next she struck a second mine, and this was under her foremost magazine. That was a very different matter, since the whole fore half of the ship, including her bridge, became wrecked, some of her oil-fuel tanks were burst open, the oil caught fire, and *Lika* quickly changed into a fierce conflagration. Of the men forward, numbering about sixty, the greater part were killed (though some were eventually rescued and taken prisoners into Durazzo), the captain and two sub-lieutenants were hurled from the bridge to the sea, the former shouting orders from the water telling the first lieutenant (who remained on board till the last) to destroy the confidential books—a fine example of devotion to duty. He happened to be the flotilla's senior officer.

Now just ahead of *Lika* was her sister *Triglav*, who, almost immediately after the former had burst into flames, herself struck a mine amidships though she did not founder. Not unnaturally these two disasters caused a grave impression on human emotions, so that a short hesitation ensued before the *Czepel* came alongside *Triglav* and prepared to take her in tow. The other destroyers lowered boats, and picked up some of the survivors

from *Lika*, but to go alongside her was impossible. Thus ten men were left on board till the *Lika* sank, and these were the party who, after being in the water for three hours, landed into captivity.

Nor did Captain Sietz's anxieties ease up. Every seaman knows by experience that some care is needed when taking a ship in tow not to let the slack of the warp or cable get foul of propellers. Alas, the *Czepel* did in this evolution foul one of her screws, wherefore the job had to be taken over by the *Tatra*, whilst *Helgoland* endeavoured to keep down the shore batteries' fire; but at last the squadron began to move off homewards with one destroyer lost, one in a leaking condition, and a third unable to do her full speed. The wonder is that the other two had not been blown up. By rights the flotilla should have numbered six, but the destroyer *Orgen* of this group was at Pola having her routine refit.

Very different, then, had this visit of the Austrians been from that of December 6, when they had bombarded Durazzo and attacked a few local sailing craft. The latter were known as "trabaccoli" and easy preys, so that the Austrian crews ironically referred to the incident as the "Battle of the Trabaccoli." On December 29 the seriousness lay not merely in *Lika's* loss but the peril that now threatened a squadron whose speed is that of the slowest unit, and our interest now quickens as we wonder whether Seitz could extricate his force from what threatened to be a complete dilemma. Either he must leave the *Triglav* and *Czepel* to their fate and scurry back into Cattaro, or he must stand by them at slow speed and expect attack from the Allies within a few short hours. It is to his eternal credit that he chose the latter alternative, with full realisation of what would follow.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE CRUISERS' CHASE

**P**ROPERLY to narrate the following story with all its excitements and suspense, the strong contrasts, the powerful situations, the tense moments, the baffling interferences, the super-efforts of men and machinery, we should need the assistance of the modern cinema. The technique of showing the spectator a series of pictures illustrating what was happening simultaneously, but in different ships in different parts of the Adriatic, and even at widely distant harbours, would be a wonderful help to our imagination. We should watch the clock's fingers revolve to the fated hour, the gradual turning of the hand that indicated steam pressure rising; we should witness the wireless operators feverishly despatching or writing down the thrilling messages, and then we could momentarily switch back to see Captain Seitz pacing his bridge, or pouring over his chart, picking up his pair of dividers to measure yet again the miles that still separated him from home. Another flash of scene would show the *Triglav's* pumps working at full bore to keep down the rising water.

It is difficult merely by means of the printed page to present the problem from every angle, yet at least we may see the story threads weaving themselves into a remarkable tapestry.

First of all came the wireless news across the Adriatic from Durazzo to Vice-Admiral Cutinelli in his flagship at Brindisi, where also lay at their buoys British and Italian light cruisers, French and Italian destroyers. In the outer harbour were H.M.S. *Dartmouth* (Captain A. P. Addison, R.N.) and the Italian *Quarto*, both at half an hour's notice for proceeding to sea. Of these two light cruisers the former possessed 5250 tons displacement, 25 knots speed, and an armament of eight 6-inch guns. The Italian was of 3300 tons, 29 knots, and mounted six 4·7-inch guns. At 7.10 a.m. of this December 29 an officer came aboard *Dartmouth* from Admiral Cutinelli bearing a slip of paper with orders to proceed. Thirty-five minutes later the two cruisers slipped and steamed down harbour. The French destroyers were not ready

for sea, but at 7.30 were instructed by Captain Addison to follow, proceed towards Cattaro, and when 29 miles off that entrance to make for Cape Rodoni, which is some 17 miles north of Durazzo.

When once outside Brindisi the *Dartmouth*, at 23 knots, steered to the north-north-east, at noon altered course more to the east, and twenty minutes later sighted Platamone Point, which lies only 13 miles below Cattaro. Captain Addison's plan was to get north of the enemy so as to cut them off from reaching Cattaro, and the intention had succeeded. Then he sighted smoke ahead, sent his people to action stations, and just before 12.30 identified a large Austrian cruiser, which he rightly surmised to be the *Kaiser Karl VI*.<sup>1</sup> For Captain Seitz had intercepted the Durazzo-Brindisi message, and inferred that from the latter base Allied forces would come out to bar retreat. By means of *Helgoland's* wireless assistance was asked, and besides the above armoured cruiser there put to sea from Cattaro the modern light cruiser *Novara*, sister-ship to *Helgoland*.

This fresh development suggested that an interesting engagement was impending, though less than five hours of a winter's daylight remained: another race against time had begun. At 12.37 more smoke was sighted on the starboard bow, which turned out to be the five French destroyers from Brindisi, viz. *Casque*, *Commandant Lucas*, *Commandant Bory*, *Renaudin*, and *Bisson*, each having a speed of about 31 knots. These now joined up, and were stationed on *Dartmouth's* port beam, having come along at 26 knots.

Now when the *Dartmouth* was leaving her buoy at Brindisi there still remained the British light cruiser *Weymouth* (sister ship in all respects to *Dartmouth*), the Italian light cruiser *Nino Bixio* (being only 80 tons bigger than the *Quarto*), and some Italian destroyers. The *Weymouth* (Captain D. B. Crampton, R.N.) was under orders to have steam for 12 knots by 10 a.m., and for full speed at noon, but at 7.45 a.m. came verbal orders from Vice-Admiral Cutinelli to raise steam at once as the Austrians were off Durazzo. Such was the energy and such the efficiency of *Weymouth's* engineering department, that by 9 a.m. she had enough steam for even full speed. Ten minutes later came confirmatory news that the Austrians were still off Durazzo, wherefore Rear-Admiral Belleni hoisted his flag in the *Nino Bixio*, and at 9.30 a.m. proceeded from Brindisi followed by *Weymouth*,

<sup>1</sup> Built in 1900, 6151 tons, 20 knots, armed with two 9.4-inch and eight 6-inch guns. Therefore, in all but speed, superior to *Dartmouth* or *Quarto*.

accompanied by the four Italian destroyers *Abba*, *Nievo*, *Mosto*, *Pilo*, whose speed was over 30 knots.

When once outside, the squadron bound for Cattaro steamed off to the north-north-east at 24 knots. Immediately an enemy submarine (which evidently had been sent to watch the Brindisi approach) was sighted to the north-north-west, but within five minutes dived. So the next two hours passed, by noon this squadron was nearly halfway across (lat.  $41^{\circ} 26'$  N., long.  $18^{\circ} 21\frac{1}{2}'$  E.), and at five minutes before one o'clock their smoke became visible to the *Dartmouth*. Then at 1.18 p.m. things began to happen, as *Weymouth* altered course to the eastward and increased speed to 25 knots; for *Dartmouth*, now steering a south-south-east course, observed on her starboard bow more smoke, which must clearly come from Captain Seitz's squadron, who had been making merely the speed of the towed *Triglav*. So the Austrians were not yet past the Gulf of Drin.

It was at 1.30 that this smoke separated into two portions: one crossed to port, and indicated the *Tatra* towing the leaking *Tagrav*. The second smoke came from *Helgoland*, escorted by *Balaton* and *Czepel*. Captain Addison, so excellently placed between the enemy and Cattaro, now went full speed towards *Helgoland*, whilst ordering the French destroyers to attack the *Tatra-Triglav* tow. Thus began four exciting hours, during which the outstanding personalities were Captain Seitz of *Helgoland*, Captain Crampton of *Dartmouth*, and Captain Addison of *Weymouth*. The most disappointing factor was Rear-Admiral Belleni's lack of leadership.

By 1.40 Captain Seitz's orders to abandon the *Triglav* had been carried out, so that when the French destroyers came up it was to find the destroyer abandoned, with no one aboard, and she went to the bottom. That made a total of two destroyers lost by the enemy to-day, and *Tatra* endeavoured to rejoin *Helgoland* whilst *Czepel* tried to escape homewards. Out from Cattaro had flown an aeroplane, which bombed two of the Italian destroyers, but the real drama centred around Captain Seitz in his double attempt to give *Czepel* a safe run, and to extricate the other three destroyers, as well as himself, out of a menacing situation. How could this be accomplished?

His 27 or 28 knots, as compared with the two British cruisers' nominal 25 or 26 knots, gave him a clear 2 knots advantage, which meant that time was on his side; if only he could, with his inferior armament, keep out of range for another four hours he

should be able to escape under the cover of darkness. Sunset would be at 4.23 p.m., so that by about 5.30 p.m. he ought to be streaking back towards Cattaro along the shortest course : in the meanwhile he would try dodging through the ring of cruisers and destroyers, but if unable to make a break he must avoid being hit.

Seitz's short-ranged guns can be forgotten when we realise that in four hours he could have put the Allies 8 miles, or 16,000 yards, astern. But his clear-sightedness, his determination, and keen fighting spirit, contrasted sharply with the qualities manifested by Admiral Belleni. The latter not only seemed to lack initiative, but made only one signal during the ensuing pursuit. That was at 2 p.m. when *Weymouth*, having asked permission to close and chase the enemy, was allowed. Furthermore, an abler flag-officer would have used his destroyers to get ahead of the enemy by daylight and attack with torpedoes, whilst during the night hours they could likewise have operated besides keeping our cruisers in touch with the Austrian squadron. Worst of all, Admiral Belleni did not keep Admiral Cutinelli informed of the enemy's course and speed during the chase. The two British cruisers, *Topaze* and *Liverpool*, together with the three Italian 22-knot battleships *Vittorio Emanuele*, *Regina Elena* and *Roma*, all based on Brindisi, would have been invaluable had they been sent to sea. Indeed, a situation developed where they could have decided the whole issue of that day.

During this December 29 Captain Seitz's destroyers showed themselves to be a hindrance, and he would have done far better without them : instead of being an asset they proved to be an encumbrance. With two of the five now sunk his anxiety was renewed by *Tatra*. At 1.43 *Helgoland* turned south in order to protect *Tatra* from being cut off, and now the *Dartmouth*, at a range of 14,000 yards opened fire, straddling *Helgoland* with the fourth salvo, registering two hits. The latter replied presently, but her shots fell short. Between 2.40 and 3.30 occasional firing continued at ranges varying from 13,800 to 15,000 yards. It was at 2.27 that *Quarto* was sent by Captain Addison to attack the enemy destroyer which lagged behind, and was trying to join up with *Helgoland*, but at 3.15 the Italian had not succeeded, and was recalled. Half an hour later *Weymouth* sent the two Italian destroyers *Mosto* and *Pilo* on a similar mission against *Czepel*, but already the chase had become fierce, and *Weymouth* was actually doing 27 knots. Again and again did Seitz keep altering course—

to the south, to south by east, then south-west and so to the westward. The *Weymouth* opened fire with her port guns at 3.54 on *Helgoland*, but it was extreme range, and the enemy obscured herself by a liberal use of enveloping smoke, so that no hit was possible.

Once more did Captain Seitz alter course, cross *Dartmouth's* bows, and at 3.55 turned south in an endeavour to succour *Tatra*, but also—with his eyes on the time—to keep going till the shades of night cloaked him. At 4.7 *Weymouth*, after turning her starboard side to *Helgoland*, resumed fire, using extreme elevation, just as the *Tatra* at last joined up with her mother ship. There could be no guessing which way the enemy would next turn, and sunset was due after a quarter of an hour; so, whilst *Dartmouth* came south, in case the Austrians turned farther down the Italian coast, *Weymouth* held on to keep north.

But next Captain Seitz essayed another manœuvre. Having rescued his destroyer, he was about to make a turn to starboard, and cleverly concealed this by another smoke screen; two of his three destroyers crossing his stern on opposite courses and emitting dense smoke clouds. This temporarily interfered with the *Weymouth's* gunnery during an important time: although she resumed at 4.45, it was now getting dark and conditions made success impossible. True, the enemy, placed in line with the last glow of sun, could be discerned through the glasses, but the heavy smoke made it most difficult for the gun-layers to see anything except flashes of Austrian guns. At 5.50 firing ceased altogether, since darkness brought that conclusion which rivals had failed to obtain.

The net result had been a triumph for British and Austrian engineers. The *Weymouth* during the afternoon's chase actually touched 27.7 knots, which is proof enough that human efforts can upset tabular statistics. Nor was this a mere short spurt, since she kept going at full speed for a period of four hours, and then hurried along for another four. As to *Helgoland*, she excelled herself by doing over 29 knots. Nothing else could have saved her that afternoon, and, had she been encountered some hours earlier, her fate would have been grim. But a notable fact is that as a result of this pressure by the Allied forces the enemy had been shepherded right away from his base and forced across from one side of the Adriatic to the other, so that by 4.50 p.m. *Dartmouth* was in sight of the Italian coast. When we remark that Captain Seitz's squadron was compelled to pass within

25 miles (or little more than an hour's steaming) from Brindisi, and that therein lay a force needing only orders to come out, one can but sympathise with the British officers and men robbed of their prey. "It was the chance of a lifetime," recorded one officer in his diary, "and all messed up through the usual Italian incompetence."

The end of this story is quickly told. By 6 p.m. the enemy had completely succeeded in making his disappearance, with a clear run into Cattaro. Although *Bixio* and *Weymouth* and *Dartmouth* followed for a while before turning south for Brindisi, no further incident happened. Nor was an action fought with *Kaiser Karl VI* or other of the ships which had come out from Cattaro ; but the *Czepel* managed to elude her foes. Seitz had well justified the trust which his service reposed in him, and his ship had suffered about the same slight damage which the *Nino Bixio* received. But Admiral Belleni was relieved of his command by the first week in February.

Once again in naval history had been demonstrated the immense value of speed, which enables a warship to dictate range, course, and mobility.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SERBIAN EVACUATION

**B**UT this cruiser action must be regarded merely as one incident connected with the Serbian evacuation. Only a week previously we had made our withdrawal from Suvla and Anzac : by January 9 the whole of Gallipoli had been emptied of Allied troops. Centres of effort were being modified in the Mediterranean struggle, but this much was certain : Austria and Germany could not afford to look on idly whilst all these troops were being moved about to fresh spheres. The entire coast between Cattaro and Valona, together with the transport routes athwart the lower Adriatic, must expect to be lively until the last Serbian soldier had been safely removed. Extreme watchfulness in the meanwhile was very essential.

As part of his plans the enemy might now make full use of submarines, mines, and aeroplanes : he might even prefer these three weapons exclusively, seeing how narrowly his cruiser and destroyers had evaded entire destruction. Right till almost the end of February this matter of saving the emaciated Serbian soldiers never ceased to be for the Allies up the Adriatic one dominating source of anxiety, so that the German U-boats passing through the Straits during this period were actually of secondary import. At first the plan (as approved by General Mondésir) had been to evacuate from San Giovanni di Medua some 88,000 men, but Admiral Troubridge pointed out on January 6 that this indifferent harbour possessed no facilities for embarkation and that it would need protection on a large scale from attacks both by sea and air ; so in the end it was decided to use it only for taking off the sick, wounded, and refugees, whilst as many as possible would march direct to Valona or else reach the latter by steamer.

More busy than ever as a clearing-house for the Serbs did Valona become. Between the last day of December and the ninth of January four small steamers had been sent to San Giovanni and another four to Durazzo with supplies, and afterwards taking Serbs away. In the French cruiser *Jules Michelet* (12,370

tons) about 1000 men, who had been brought across to Brindisi, were taken off to Bizerta during the first week of the new year, though a tragedy occurred on January 6. Four days previously one of the small steamers had brought into Brindisi from San Giovanni an aged man—"I should think he was eighty-five at least," says one who saw him being carried ashore in a chair, "and looked half dead." This was the Commander-in-Chief of the Serbian Army, and he was lucky that all his hardships had not ended in sea. For on the date mentioned the small steamer *Brindisi* (863 tons), running between the port of that name and San Giovanni, arrived off the latter carrying several hundred tons of food, besides 425 Montenegrin reservists from Canada, when suddenly she found herself in the mine-field which the Italians had laid off San Giovanni. As a result of this quite unnecessary explosion, *Brindisi* went down<sup>1</sup> with the loss of 266 people, and the stores which Rear-Admiral Troubridge so much needed for his refugees. But the work still continued, women, children, and wounded men were being taken away by hospital ships, and then only two days later occurred a sadder episode.

We have previously had reason to mention UC-14, which in November laid mines off Cape Linguetta, causing serious disasters. On January 4 she dropped some more near the same spot, but seven of them were discovered next day north-west of that headland. She must have then gone across to the approaches of Brindisi, deposited the rest of her cargo, and waited about to see the result. From the enemy's point of view it was perfectly sound strategy to foul the way into Brindisi base, and the wonder is that this operation did not happen more frequently.

At 8 a.m. on January 8 the Italian armed merchant cruiser *Citta di Palermo* left Brindisi bound for Durazzo carrying, amongst others, 4 officers and 139 British troops. Only half an hour elapsed, and she was about 6 miles north-east of Brindisi castle when she unsuspectingly steamed right on to the mines and within a few minutes disappeared below the surface. As so often occurred, when Adriatic ships were in peril, twenty-one of those gallant little drifters were near the scene<sup>2</sup> and began their duty of saving life irrespective of their own danger. About 100 officers and men, including 75 per cent British, were thus rescued, but a

<sup>1</sup> This danger area consisted of one hundred mines laid from a position about 1½ miles north-west of the harbour in a south-west direction. *Brindisi* struck the south-west extremity of this trap and went down in twenty minutes, leaving her funnel and masts visible as a warning to others.

<sup>2</sup> It so happened that two groups of drifters had just gone to sea, and two others were returning, so they met.



hundred perished. Now among those drifters who still searched among the wreckage were the *Freuchny* and the *Morning Star*, who hoped that they might have the luck to pick up some survivors. Alas! they also hit mines. The *Freuchny* had just stopped about 9 a.m. for that purpose when she saw a mine close beside her, and before she could get clear a wave swept her right on. Instantly followed the explosion, and the death of all hands except two brothers. In like manner the *Morning Star* sank with but one hand saved. Both fishing craft had their fore portion blown away, and then the after part lurched beneath the waves: within three seconds the whole incident had begun and ended. An enormous amount of soldiers' kit floated around besides some buoys of the lost drifters. There is no question about the presence of a watchful submarine, for about 1 p.m. she was sighted by a French destroyer, who fired half a dozen rounds, but the enemy got away.

The remarkable feature of this affair is that the mines were laid in exceptionally deep water—about 55 fathoms (330 feet). Although the spot afterwards was swept, no more were found, but when we remember that UC-14 could carry only a dozen and that seven had been dropped off Cape Linguetta it scarcely surprises us that five should have been exploded by one deep-draught and two fairly shallow steamers. Such incidents were almost inevitable, but at least they afforded opportunities for demonstrating once again the fine spirit of the North Sea fishermen. Admiral Cutinelli sent an enthusiastic letter of admiration to Commander Hatcher in charge of the drifters, whilst Admiral Thursby remarked that these vessels "behaved in a most exemplary manner." No higher praise could be paid; yet fate played strange pranks that day. Whilst the navigating officer of the *Citta di Palermo* was among the saved and suffered only a black eye, the man rescued from *Morning Star* received injuries to his back and a broken arm. The *Freuchny's* skipper had the worst fortune of all, since some of the men in another drifter actually got hold of him with a boat-hook when his coat gave way and down he sank like a stone.

But every fresh development seemed to bring further tasks for these temporary warriors. Since the French took over care of the Serbian Army, who were being sent from Durazzo either to Valona *en route* ultimately for Corfu, or destined for the latter direct, the French Government decided on that island's occupation. Corfu has been well named the key of the Adriatic, and for

this reason has been the prey of various nations down the centuries. Its ownership has varied according to circumstances : in ancient days it was colonised by Corinth, its position on the sea route between Greece and Italy gave it a strategical no less than a commercial importance ; whilst for generations the Venetians of the Middle Ages and later were its proud possessors. During Napoleonic times it was occupied by more than one belligerent in turn ; from 1815 to 1863 it was under British protection (for which reason the inhabitants to this day still play cricket) ; but after the last-mentioned date Corfu formed part of Greece and, within our own generation, the Kaiser's ownership of the Achelleion palace gave the island additional interest.

It was on January 9, 1916, that a French squadron of four armed cruisers under Vice-Admiral Chocheprat put to sea from Bizerta transporting a battalion of *chasseurs alpins*, who disembarked at Corfu two days later. They took over the port, the old castle which dominates the town, the telegraph, and the Kaiser's palace. Against this surprise Greece violently but ineffectually protested ; the base became organised under Rear-Admiral de Gueydon, and a few days later nets were moored at both north and south ends of the channel separating Corfu from the mainland. Thus was made ready a temporary "home from home" for the Serbian soldiers to rest before moving on else-whither.<sup>1</sup>

But the risk of the transports being attacked ?

More likely was the route from Durazzo to be assaulted by submarines than cruisers, wherefore a line of drifters with nets down must be maintained all the way from Durazzo to Valona, and Valona to Corfu, till this vast transportation should have been completed. By mooring the nets for part of this distance, and freeing drifters to stand by their nets at the other portions, supported by destroyers ; also by employing cruisers to cover the Albanian coast embarkations against sudden raids from the north ; preparations were effected for shifting the troops with the utmost security and celerity.

The Brindisi drifter organisation, in spite of its occasional losses through enemy action, had steadily increased, so that now these small steamers numbered seventy-seven, of which some fifty-five were armed with a gun and the rest were gradually being similarly provided. From England forty-two more deck-hands trained as gunners were sent out, and events would

<sup>1</sup> See *La Guerre Navale dans La Méditerranée*, by Capitaine de Vaisseau A. Thomazi. Paris, 1929.



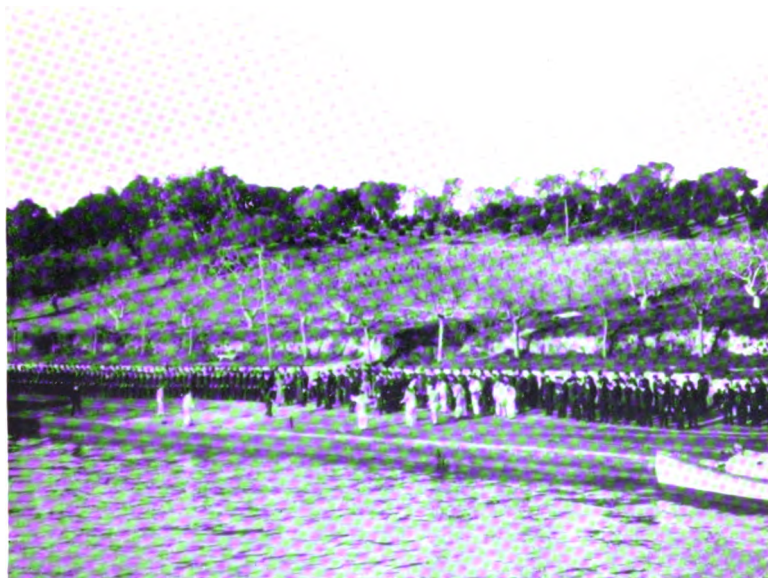
#### EVACUATION OF DURAZZO

British drifters towing shallow craft, full of Italian troops, to the transports waiting in deep water.



#### DURAZZO

This photograph was taken just after the place had been evacuated. Notice shipping sunk and the town on fire.



#### BRITISH DRIFTER ESTABLISHMENT AT BRINDISI

His Majesty the King of Italy inspecting the crews and nets.

presently emphasise the need of this protection. Having regard to the heavy work which these boats were called upon to perform, the bad weather with which they had been knocked about during an Adriatic winter, it was quite remarkable that men, hulls, and machinery kept in such good trim that always some fifty drifters at any selected hour of day or night were at sea. With their rockets for signalling a submarine's presence, their grenades and depth-charges for attacking him when foul of the nets; with their guns, rifles, and pistols for other occasions, these drifters were warships in miniature. When one day in the middle of January His Majesty the King of Italy came over with the Duke of the Abruzzi, the Minister of Marine, and other officers to inspect Brindisi naval base, all these items were displayed and a practical demonstration given of net-laying.

But across the Adriatic along the Albanian coast the race against time had become more acute, and the possibility of salving the Serbs seemed problematical. By January 10 the Austrians were attacking Mount Lowcen (5770 feet high), which is a saddle-shaped prominence less than 3 miles south-east of Cattaro and overlooking the harbour. Except on days when obscuring winds blew from south-east or south-west, this had been a most useful spot for noting the numbers and classes of enemy ships, as for instance the daily movements of submarines and destroyers—for which reason an Italian wireless station had been erected on the heights. Now, however, that station must be dismantled, and in a few days San Giovanni di Medua must be abandoned likewise.

Durazzo, relying on its mines and guns, would have to be held a little longer at all costs. Admiral Cutinelli, knowing how well the drifters had distinguished themselves on every anxious occasion, sent over Lieutenant-Commander Cochrane to visit Durazzo and see how coal and supplies could be obtained for any such craft to be based there. Cochrane set off therefore on the 18th aboard his inspecting steamer the Italian-manned *Mazzini*, in company of the drifters *Garrigill* (Sub-Lieutenant H. H. Deakin, R.N.R.) and *Young Linnet*. Having been piloted through the mine-field, they beheld Durazzo's harbour full of sunken sailing craft, "the masts sticking up all over the place. Several, still afloat, had been badly handled; one with her main-mast shot away, the mast and rigging lying in a confused mass across her upper deck. Also a sunken Greek steamer, the *Michael*, lying on an even keel, with her upper deck awash. All this the

result of the recent Austrian raid. The Austrian destroyer *Lika* lay sunk in the mine-field, her foremast and fore funnel sticking up above the water." It was arranged with the Italian Naval Reserve officer, in charge of embarking the Serbians, to use the *Michael* as a coal depot for the drifters.

"The town was absolutely full of Serbians, Albanians, and Montenegrins. All dirty to a degree." And then an Austrian aeroplane flew over, which made a careful inspection of the mine-field until chased away. It was after *Mazzini* had left the two drifters here to help in carrying Serbians from shore to transports that the former reached Valona Bay already full of shipping. Here rode the two Italian armoured cruisers *Vettor Pisani* and *Francesco Ferruccio*, destroyers, torpedo-boats, transports, hospital-ships, colliers, tugs, an imposing fleet, to say nothing of the drifters mooring their nets outside to the buoys, whilst ashore were Italian troops, Albanians unloading lighters of flour and other stores. For the Serbs were hurrying south from the abandoned San Giovanni di Medua by road and sea. Whilst three hospital-ships (one British, one French, and one Italian) took on board from San Giovanni the women, children, sick and wounded, bound for Marseilles, all who were fit enough to march through Durazzo to Valona did so; but the weak, the Serbian Government and Treasury, the King and Queen of Montenegro, and the twenty guns from San Giovanni all travelled south by steamer. Before January 25 there had also been evacuated the foreign diplomats and consular officials from Serbia and Montenegro, British hospital units, and Admiral Troubridge with the members of his Mission.

At Durazzo the necessity of unloading provisions for the troops ashore at the same time that other troops were being embarked brought the daily average rate of evacuation down to 2000 by sea, whilst another 2000 left each day by land. What would have happened to the crowded transports but for the drifters' nets may readily be imagined: not merely were the submarines lying in wait, but they were anything except passive. Let us take two occurrences both of Thursday, January 20. On this day the previously mentioned *Mazzini* with Lieutenant-Commander Cochrane on board, but having an Italian crew, had just finished inspecting the nets near Saseno and now was returning to Brindisi. It was such a lovely spring day that both the British and Italian officers decided to have lunch on deck.

At 1 p.m. the meal had barely finished, and they were sitting in

the sun smoking, when a shriek from the Italians on the bridge summoned the two officers to their feet. About 70 yards astern of the ship rushed a torpedo. "The helm," says Lieutenant-Commander Cochrane, "was put hard a-starboard and engines to full speed and we headed for where we imagined the submarine to be—right in the rays of the sun. Almost simultaneously another torpedo came charging towards us and missed our stern by less than 10 yards. If we had not had helm on, it would most undoubtedly have struck us. It was running about 4 feet deep, was steel with copper head, and we could see every detail of it. It was not an over-pleasant sensation, wondering whether it would hit us or not. The submarine now showed her periscope and two projections by it, and we opened fire with both guns. The shots went near but did not strike her, and she submerged almost at once."

The Italian crew shrieked a good bit at first, but quietened down after their Italian officer ordered in a loud voice his revolver to be fetched. So strange indeed was this foreign discipline that one stoker came up from below and placed himself in a boat, "but was mighty soon sent down out of it. The skipper and mate went the colour of paper, and were more occupied in putting on lifebelts than in anything else." But after hunting the enemy for over an hour nothing more was seen.

The second submarine that day was sighted just west of Cape Laghi, which is the southern end of Durazzo Bay. Here a drifting mine was being investigated by Sub-Lieutenant Deakin, R.N.R., with those two drifters *Garrigill* and *Young Linnet* which had so recently begun their work at this port, when at 1.30 p.m. (that is to say, half an hour after the attack on *Mazzini*) a submarine was observed on the surface heading towards the Cape. At once *Garrigill* steamed towards her and opened fire with her Italian 57 mm. gun at a range of 3000 yards, which afterwards came down to 2700 yards. The first shot fell short, the second went over, but the third and fourth fell so near the conning-tower that the enemy dived and did not show herself again. A short time afterwards the *Young Linnet*, who kept cruising over the spot, passed through a large quantity of oil on the surface about half a mile long and 40 feet broad. But this was just one of those tricks which enemy submarine captains were fond of playing; and in a later chapter we shall note another U-boat releasing oil for the purpose of deceiving patrol vessels into the belief that she had been wounded mortally.



The presence of these two submarines was evidence enough that the enemy had no intention of relaxing his efforts in the Otranto Straits or off the Albanian coast. Nor did he omit to use his aeroplanes for obtaining the latest information as to the Allies' operations, and this led to a curious incident at the northern end of the Adriatic. We have already mentioned that a base for British submarines had been established at Venice, and that from the Istrian peninsula the Austrian aircraft used to fly out. It was on January 16 that the previously mentioned B-11 left Venice Arsenal for a short cruise. This was the boat which under Lieutenant Norman Holbrook had won fame and the Victoria Cross for her captain at the Dardanelles: now, however, Lieutenant S. M. G. Gravener (who during the Dardanelles operations had commanded her sister, B-10) was in charge.

After remaining a few hours off Piave, B-11 proceeded to the entrance of Quarnero Gulf, and during the forenoon of the 17th lay in wait on the surface, some 15 miles south of Cape Promontore (the southern extremity of the Istrian peninsula), with conning-tower open and hull trimmed for immediate diving. It was an excellent position should anything come along bound to the southward from Trieste, Pola, or Fiume. But B-11 had very bad luck. At 11.30 a.m., whilst it was being removed for the purposes of cleaning, one of the periscope glasses was unfortunately fractured, which meant that if she dived the boat would be blind. At 11.45 she accordingly rose to the surface and began moving with her gas-engine. Judge of Gravener's feelings when, less than half an hour later, he sighted the very thing he had so recently longed to see. For coming towards him from the north appeared smoke which a few minutes later indicated not less than four Austrian destroyers or torpedo-boats steaming at high speed, line abreast, about one mile apart. It was like the answer to a submarine officer's prayer—but for the damaged periscope.

However, he resolved to attempt the impossible, at 12.5 dived and attempted his attack, only to prove that the uselessness of this instrument defeated him. For the best of reasons he was now compelled to submerge 60 feet and proceed in this condition to the west for a couple of hours. At 2.15 he rose to the surface, looked round, saw nothing in sight, and carried on towards the Italian coast for nearly another hour. But now, at 3.10, an object was descried on the water, away off the starboard bow, the position being 15 miles south-west of Cape Promontore.

Lieutenant Gravener, still on the surface, motored towards it



and found this to be an Austrian seaplane, a biplane with two small wing floats and a big central boat float, in which the pilot and observer sat well forward with only their heads showing over the edge. These officers consisted of a sub-lieutenant engineer and a midshipman. At first these were filled with joy, thinking that here was one of their own smaller submarines come to their rescue, but the midshipman displayed no small surprise when Lieutenant Gravener announced British nationality. Suddenly the Austrians began ridding themselves of confidential articles by dropping these over the side, though the submarine managed to recover their chart. The aviators now lost no time in knocking holes through the central float and the machine began to sink, which prevented a thorough examination being made, and finally the seaplane capsized. Of course the Austrians were taken prisoners, who explained that they had left Pola at 11 a.m. with five other 'planes bound for the Italian coast at Ancona, which was to be bombed, but the motors had broken down, and they remained in great danger on the surface for over three hours.

Amid all the changes and chances of war by sea and air it would be difficult to find a stranger set of circumstances. If the accident to the periscope had robbed B-11 of bagging one torpedo craft, it had enabled her to save two men from a lonely death. On the other hand, the latter had stepped from one peril to another, for the nearer this submarine approached her base the more likely was she to be attacked; to assume that Austrian seaplanes or destroyers would presently come along searching for the lost sheep could not be considered improbable, and B-11 might be surprised on the surface.

But notice yet another coincidence. Lieutenant Gravener now took his boat up the Gulf of Venice right to the top, eastward of the Piave, where the lighthouse of Caorle (which happens to be on the steeple of a church) could not be sighted, though it is the only conspicuous object along that bit of coast. Nor could any of the land be seen. For a fog had settled down to cover everything. So he felt his way towards the shore, and just before midnight anchored off Caorle in 5 fathoms, next morning going on to Venice, where he safely arrived with his prisoners, whose notebooks made interesting reading.

## CHAPTER XIV

### DANGEROUS ADVENTURE

ONE of the most striking features during the Great War was the reliance which had to be made on every kind of ship, from the biggest tonnage to the smallest. And it was the light-draught steamers that were especially valuable between December 10 and January 18, running across from Italy to the shallow harbours of San Giovanni di Medua and Durazzo. Whilst bigger vessels would have meant fewer trips, they would have been less suitable for the special duty, but some idea of the excellent work performed during those few busy weeks will be appreciated by a mere statement of figures: in spite of the need for facilities as regards unloading, 5823 tons of provisions were landed and 6283 passengers taken away, the final contingent leaving San Giovanni on January 21. The latter dismantled its wireless, and a week later came the Austrians to occupy the town.

But the heaviest and most responsible work lay in transferring the Serbian Army from Durazzo to Valona and Corfu, for which purpose three British steamers had been sent round from the Aegean: the *Folkestone*, *Gazelle* (which had once been employed in peace-time traffic across the English Channel), and the *Fauvette*. These three had recently served as mine-sweepers under Vice-Admiral de Robeck and for other purposes. In spite of their capacity for passengers, they were nothing like adequate for transporting men numbering many thousands, so a dozen small Italian steamers were engaged on the Durazzo-Valona route, besides six more Italian and seven French steamers running from Valona to Corfu. Sometimes, but not always, it was practicable to carry on direct to Corfu; such, however, was the insistence on getting these troops clear of Durazzo that it sufficed if Valona were reached and transhipment followed later.

All this vast undertaking was complicated by incident after incident. Not to weary the reader we may content ourselves with three samples. On January 20 the Italian hospital-ship *König Albert*, carrying patients, was stopped by U-XI outside San Giovanni di Medua, the captain and principal medical officer being

taken aboard the submarine, who ordered the steamer to follow her into Cattaro. There a commission of twenty officers made a thorough examination but could find nothing irregular or contrary to the Geneva Convention, so that after being detained for thirty-six hours the *Konig Albert* was released and allowed to sail. Now this U-XI was identical with the German UB-1, which in an earlier chapter we mentioned as having arrived by train at Pola. During the summer of 1915 she was transferred to Austrian ownership, and changed her number. Her presence off San Giovanni during the final hours of evacuation once more indicated the risks which transports endured.

Then, again, during the last few days of that month four French steamers had to be sent across from Brindisi to Durazzo with food and clothing not merely for the Serbs but also for the Italian troops. Lest the enemy's cruisers or submarines should sink these requisite cargoes, two of the biggest destroyers that might have been patrolling the Otranto Straits must be despatched for escorts. As if there were not work and worry enough, Durazzo became a further target for the enemy's attention. The rate of embarkation had been speeded up, and the transports were being sent along the netted corridor so quickly as possible, when, at 5 p.m. of January 27 (whilst five vessels were inside Durazzo loading), one of the enemy *Tatra*-class destroyers accompanied by an aeroplane was sighted by the Italian light cruiser *Puglia* off Cape Laghi. The recognition, however, was mutual, and the destroyer thought it best to run away, whilst the aeroplane went over Durazzo, and before racing back home dropped her bombs over the town. Fortunately no damage occurred, though these surprises scarcely helped in getting the troops away.

Next day it became obvious that the enemy was lurking about in the hope of breaking through the protective nets that had been laid between Cape Linguetta and Corfu via Merlera Island. For at 10.30 a.m. the drifter *Heatherbloom* had shot her nets some 11 miles to the south of Linguetta, and at 2 p.m. the mate noticed they were submerging, nor could they be hauled in. They were 84 feet deep, and had to be slipped after being buoyed. A depth-charge was then exploded over the spot, but somehow the U-boat managed to make her escape.

During these strenuous days no part of the Mediterranean area was so full of activity and notable happenings, nor were any crews more severely worked than those of the drifters. Their normal rest in port had been shortened to a minimum, and even the relief

drifters were kept at four hours' notice to steam out in case the enemy suddenly emerged and caused sinkings, for on these fishermen and their nets pivoted the safe withdrawal of a nation's army. The Austrians were approaching the peak of their efforts, and if they should not succeed during the next few days then the Allies with their drifters, their various transports, their escorting and covering light forces, had defeated the enemy's naval efforts, robbed the Austrians and Bulgarian armies of their land successes. To sweep the Serbs from home and territory but allow them to be rescued, succoured, reconstituted, fed, clothed, healed, was merely to shift a danger without wiping it out. One may well question the subsequent employment of these battalions, it may even be argued that had the Dardanelles evacuation been cancelled, and deadlock continued till considerably over 100,000 Serbian soldiers had been refitted and able to land at Gallipoli, we might have driven the Turks off the peninsula and allowed the Anglo-French Fleet to reach Constantinople. But, in any case, this difficult transference of dispirited men down a 100 miles of coast (notwithstanding mines, submarines, aeroplanes, and Cattaro's surface ships) is something of which the Allies might well be proud.

Had the Austrians exhibited greater enterprise and been more willing to take risks after the manner of Captain Seitz it might have been expected that their capital ships<sup>1</sup> from the north would come down to support a well-planned raid by light cruisers and destroyers. Even if this had led to a fleet engagement, and brought out the barnacle-covered battleships that had lain so long in Brindisi and Taranto, would not everything have been worth while the risk provided only crowded transports and the drifters could be sent to the bottom? No greater service could have been performed by the Austrians to their friends. The military value of destroying thousands of Serbians, the complete disorganisation of arrangements for embarking, the removal of obstacles to the free passage of U-boats, and the moral effect of these measures, can scarcely be overestimated. And the probability is that the job might have been effectively, no less than rapidly, carried out just before a moonless night enabled the retreating squadrons to get northward invisible.

Truly a wonderful opportunity was thrown away during those

<sup>1</sup> A reconnaissance by aeroplanes on February 6 proved that inside Pola were three Dreadnoughts, six pre-Dreadnoughts, and two older battleships, besides cruisers and torpedo craft.

February hours of short daylight and long darkness. We cannot suppose that a German admiral, such as von Scheer, would ever have permitted the Allies this chance, as to move more than 30,000 warriors a week from a position well north of the Straits to below its entrance.

So, instead of one smashing blow the Austrians contented themselves with pin-pricks and stabs, which were painful though not mortal. On the second day of February the small French steamer *Jean Bart*, an empty transport returning to Durazzo from Valona, went down at 9 a.m. 4 miles from Cape Laghi, and only five men were saved. Whether the loss was caused by submarine or mine cannot be stated definitely, but the tragedy had in it something of comedy. The *Jean Bart* was really a trawler, and one of her men in the water sighted a drifter, so hoisted an oar vertically to attract attention (this was either *Garrigil* or *Young Linnet*, which we remember being taken to Durazzo the previous month). Keen as ever, the fishermen thought the oar was a periscope, and were not made wiser until they had fired twenty-four rounds.<sup>1</sup>

On this same day two Austrian aeroplanes<sup>2</sup> did their worst by dropping a dozen bombs on Valona, killing and wounding about twenty Italian and Serbian soldiers, but the Italian Army authorities were shortly strengthening this centre further by sending another 15,000 soldiers and ten batteries in addition to 50,000 men already there. Still the pin-pricks continued, and on the 4th came disappointment to at least one submarine captain. Near Durazzo he observed the French S.S. *Assiria* (one of the transports running to Valona) and fired at her. The torpedo hit but failed to explode. *Assiria's* two Italian destroyer escorts, the *Animoso* and *Garibaldini*, dropped depth-charges, which probably gave the enemy a good shaking, though nothing further happened; the *Garibaldini* also picked up the defective torpedo and brought it into Brindisi, where no little interest was aroused.

But suspense was quickening on shore. To-day, also, an action was being fought at the Ismi River to the north of Durazzo

<sup>1</sup> A similar incident happened on February 11, 1918, in the Irish Sea, to the survivors of the Q-ship *Cullist*, who were on a raft. They sighted a trawler, to whom one man held up a paddle. The trawler at first took the picture to be that of a submarine's conning-tower with periscope, which she was about to ram until she heard the people singing "It's a Long Way to Tipperary" (see p. 290 of my *Danger Zone*, London, 1934).

<sup>2</sup> One was forced down near the mouth of the River Vojuzza (north-north-east of Saseno Island), and was captured by torpedo craft, but the two aviators had just time to be rescued by the other aeroplane.

between the Serbians and 8000 advancing Austrians, where the latter were repulsed with heavy losses. Not for much longer could this port of convenience be held immune, but less than a week would suffice if that could be guaranteed, and the present rate of withdrawal maintained. Durazzo might then be abandoned, and if the Austrians marched south against Valona, the Italian Army could make a stand on the Vojuzza River north of Valona. Meanwhile aircraft visited both Valona and Durazzo almost daily. At the latter harbour Sub-Lieutenant Deakin's two drifters were having an exciting and busy time towing ships off the shoal, during which period the *Garrigil* got ashore twice and damaged her propeller-blades so that she could do only  $4\frac{1}{2}$  knots. Another drifter had a narrow escape when one of the bombs dropped from the sky over the town within 30 feet of her. Still more drifters were sent there from Brindisi to help the transports and pilot them past the mine-field.

A fresh development was manifested when six mines were found off Cape Santa Maria di Leuca, at the heel of Italy, and so placed to entrap vessels coming out from Taranto bound for Valona, but this new policy had a significant sequel as the reader will shortly observe. In the meantime Austria's chance for striking at the transports was rapidly diminishing, and the simplest reckoning would show that it was already a question rather of hours than days ere the last troops were taken aboard the Durazzo transports. Would the enemy come south even now? Would he be in strength? Or just those light, fast, vessels which had bombarded the coast previously?

The routine at this time for the Allies was to employ in turn some of the nine large French and the ten large Italian destroyers to work with the Anglo-Italian cruisers (placed north of the transport route), whilst the six smaller Italian destroyers used to escort the transports. Thus there existed a double protection of cover and convoy, and on February 6 the lower Adriatic was ready for the enemy's final effort. This is what happened.

On the afternoon of February 5 H.M.S. *Liverpool*, another of the *Town* class cruisers, together with the Italian destroyer *Pilade Bronzetti* (32 knots), left Brindisi in order to cover the traffic between Durazzo and Valona Bay. Next day, during the forenoon, her commanding officer, Captain G. H. Vivian, R.N., sighted some wreckage which probably belonged to the previously-mentioned *Jean Bart* together with a floating corpse, and at 1 p.m. *Liverpool* was heading in the direction of Brindisi. But shortly before 2 p.m.

an Austrian aeroplane appeared almost over her stern and flying at about 5000 feet. She now turned and went off in the direction of Cattaro at high speed, having apparently been scouting. The British cruiser and Italian destroyer likewise turned after her and immediately observed smoke to the north-north-east—that is to say, in a direct line from Cattaro. The *Liverpool* soon worked up to 25 knots (her designed full speed), but at 2.30 was doing over 26 knots, whilst *Bronzetti*, who had been sent ahead to reconnoitre, by this time had got 3 or 4 miles away. The latter at 2.45 informed Captain Vivian correctly that the stranger was a destroyer of the *Huszar* class (384 tons, 28½ knots).

The Austrian, in her anxiety to retreat, was doing her best to gain her home shore, but *Bronzetti*, by 3 p.m., had, with superior speed, lessened the intervening distance and fired three salvoes, to which the enemy replied with shots that fell very short. Unfortunately the race had started from a spot less than 50 miles from Cattaro, wherefore the *Bronzetti* could not reach the Austrian before the latter got into Traste Bay, which lies only 5 miles below Cattaro's entrance, and provides good anchorage. But here, also, were shore batteries, which opened fire on the Italian and gave the Austrian protection. Thus, in short, since the enemy had escaped into this security, Captain Vivian directed the former to abandon the chase and the two Allied ships turned south again, arriving that evening in Brindisi.

Now at 11 a.m. of this day H.M.S. *Weymouth* (Captain D. B. Crampton, R.N.), with the French destroyer *Bouclier*, came out for her patrol, and at 2.23 received *Liverpool's* wireless message, "Enemy ship in sight." At full speed a course was steered for Cattaro, but an hour later came the signal that the Austrian had got home. Captain Crampton accordingly went back on his patrol, and nothing further occurred till 7.30 p.m., when he was 40 miles south of Cattaro, and steaming at 18 knots to the east-south-east. Suddenly on his port bow he descried three, and probably, four enemy destroyers heading to the south. Gradually the British cruiser and French destroyer altered course to the south, and speed was increased to 22 knots. The Austrians were brought on the port beam, and deliberate fire opened at 7000 yards. Just before 8 p.m. the rivals were closing further, and the range got down to 5000 yards.

Obviously the Austrians were bent on a raid in the Durazzo neighbourhood, and had selected their time well, so that in less than two more hours' steaming they would have been off that port,

done their bombardment, and found time to fall upon any transports at sea. They could then turn back and be inside Cattaro before daylight. *Weymouth* completely upset the enemy's plan. In spite of the oncoming darkness, the cruiser managed to aim nine rounds, but by 8.10 the Austrians already were on a northerly course, making for home with only their smoke visible. Chase was made after them, though at 9 o'clock the smoke vanished entirely and the incident had concluded. During the night Captain Crampton kept within 30 miles of Durazzo ready for any development. It never came, and all that showed was a searchlight in the neighbourhood of Traste Bay which worked intermittently throughout the dark hours.

It is true that at 7.15 the following morning (February 7), whilst steaming at 20 knots with *Bouclier* close astern, *Weymouth* saw a torpedo fired towards her on the starboard beam, missing the cruiser's stern by only a few feet. With great promptness did the French destroyer swerve out and drop three bombs in the position where she had observed a periscope some 250 yards off. No hit was made, and the net result of the enemy's half-hearted excursion these two days with surface, aerial, and underwater craft amounted to nothing; they lost their final chance of doing something on a big scale, and resolved that the pin-pricks could be made only with submarines or aeroplanes.

I think one cannot deny that Captain Seitz's narrow escape in the *Helgoland* on December 29, and the loss of two destroyers, the perpetual vigilance of the Allies' cruisers with their destroyers, were really the factors which induced the Austrians to lose their fighting spirit and play for safety. This anxiety and fear of sacrificing their ships is understandable, though every student of naval history well knows that such policy would eventually bring unhappy results. "Ships and men rot in port"; crews become demoralised by weeks of inactivity; boredom is followed by brooding and discontent; then surely looms the terrible menace of mutiny and revolution. We know how Germany's High Sea Fleet and empire disintegrated exactly along these lines, and the reader will see for himself precisely the same sequence in regard to the Austrians. This will be shown later.

Only two days now remained for the evacuation to be finished. Would the enemy's U-boats achieve some spectacular *coup*? Certainly they were not idle. On the day after *Weymouth's* escape that submarine, or one of its sisters, had an exciting time  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles west-south-west of Saseno Island's southern end. It



was 7.30 a.m. and the drifter *Lily Reiach* was lying to her nets when the mate called down to Skipper Robert Grant that something had fouled them. Up rushed Grant on deck, who saw the ripple of the buff-buoys disappearing in an easterly direction. The warp was hove in, but the strain presently became so great that the nets parted, so she steamed over them, dropping a depth-charge which exploded violently and sent up oil as well as bubbles for ten minutes. Near to *Lily Reiach* was the drifter *Helenora*, whose nets also felt the strain after the explosion, so the second vessel cut her warps and dropped a depth-charge too. There is no question of a U-boat having been entangled, though she extricated herself at last. Two days later (10th) each drifter found her nets in the very position where they had sunk, and it is fair to assume that the submarine spent some alarming hours wriggling out of an awkward situation.

The weather happened to be fine, with a long swell, and the nets were part of the protection on the Valona-Corfu route. At the time everyone believed that a U-boat had been accounted for; indeed, after full consideration the Admiralty awarded the sum of £1000 to be divided between the pair. Whilst we know to-day that the submarine escaped, this money had been earned over and over again by hard, brave persistence. Such, however, is the fortune of war that but one man of *Lily Reiach's* crew ever received her share. Three weeks later all the rest were blown into the next world.

That more than one U-boat simultaneously operated between Durazzo and Cape Linguetta is quite obvious; for on this same day (8th), and at 7 a.m., the small steamer *Dauno* was attacked below Durazzo Bay off Cape Laghi, although being escorted by the two Italian torpedo-boats *Centauro* and *Albatross*, who dropped several depth-charges, the torpedo missing. Two hours later, and a few miles further north, the French steamer *Miquelon* had a similar experience, but here the torpedo came to the surface and was recovered by the French destroyer *Faulx*, who also dropped bombs.

Thus, in one way or another, submarine life could never be regarded as dull, and this applied to British and French crews no less than to Austrian or German. Even the most experienced captains were liable to sudden moments of grave peril. Take the case of Lieutenant-Commander E. C. Boyle, who in H.M. Submarine E-14 a few months previously had earned a wonderful reputation at the Dardanelles by defying all the Turks' mine-

fields and the strong current of the Narrows, entering the Sea of Marmara, creating havoc among the local shipping, returning to his base safely, and winning the Victoria Cross.

Later he was sent to Brindisi, and one day of this February he had put to sea in the Adriatic. After being submerged for some time he rose to the surface and found another submarine lying quite close. No time to dive! The only choice must be to ram, which he proceeded to do—but missed by a matter of 6 feet. Just then someone aboard the other boat dropped his pipe out of his mouth, making a shower of sparks, which seemed to E-14 as if the enemy had opened fire. Judge of Boyle's surprise when the "enemy" turned out to be a Frenchman!

So we come to that memorable Wednesday, February 9, when the recent good weather changed to dullness and it blew a strong *scirocco*. But at last the great task had been accomplished and the Serbian evacuation from Durazzo completed with the coming of night. Not less than 130,000 of these troops had been sent on their way to Corfu, and there remained only the cavalry and horses together with about 8000 Italian troops and guns in the Durazzo neighbourhood. Kings, princes, diplomats, Government officials, women, children, refugees, nurses, sick, wounded, Montenegrins, and the entire Serbian Army had thus been saved from the enemy, to say nothing of those thousands which had been captured by the Serbs as prisoners. As we consider the proximity of Cattaro, the strength of the enemy's sea service, the number of U-boats, such a vast undertaking seems impossible. And the ensuing days stressed this still more when—all too late to be of major importance—the Austrian military forces began their southern advance.

No one was better fitted than the Rear-Admiral commanding the British Adriatic squadron to appreciate all that had been done by our ships and men. Sir Cecil Thursby (who had been recently created a K.C.B.) remarked after this evacuation that in his opinion it could never have been brought to such a successful conclusion without the assistance of our cruisers and drifters. "In regard to the drifters," he added, "no praise is too high for them. Their nets have kept off submarine attacks, and no matter what happens drifters always appear on the spot. They have already been the means of saving many lives from ships which have struck mines or been torpedoed."

Nevertheless, the fishermen had barely begun. Many of them would never live to catch North Sea herrings again.

## CHAPTER XV

### DURAZZO DRIFTERS

**I**N order to remove the Italian troops, nine small steamers, tugs, and other craft were sent to Durazzo: nor did the enemy relax his submarine efforts. It was on February 15 that UC-12 deposited another cargo of mines off Cape Laghi on which the S.S. *Memphis* (a transport) struck. She was towed towards Durazzo, but sank before they got her inside the bay.

Not immediately, however, did this withdrawal of soldiers and guns take place: the Italian Government curiously telegraphed that they were to remain for the present. The steamers thus were sent back from Durazzo, and it was whilst *Memphis* was on her way to Valona that her disaster occurred. "There was more fuss being made about the final evacuation of Durazzo, with its few thousand Italians and few hundred horses," writes a British officer, "than over the transport of the entire Serbian Army." Finally it was decided that ten drifters under Lieutenant C. Watchman, R.N.R., in the *Gavenwood* should be sent to form a continuous line from 5 miles west of Cape Laghi southwards in the direction of Valona, and this led to another of those sad incidents.

Whilst the three fleet sweepers *Gazelle*, *Folkestone*, and *Fauvette*<sup>1</sup> could now get away from danger—the first two bound for Genoa for refit, the third making for Gibraltar and England after loading up with sulphur from Sicily for disinfecting—there could be no respite for the drifters. So strenuously were they employed that only four of them were left in harbour. It was on February 20 that *Gavenwood* when 10 miles east of Brindisi struck a mine—doubtless laid by UC-12—and notwithstanding the immediate arrival on the scene by *Lily Reiach* and *Helenora*, who had been only 50 yards astern, nothing could be seen of Watchman and his crew, although ten drifters searched about for a considerable time. The vessel had been simply blown to pieces.

Next day the Italian hospital-ship *Marechiaro* (720 tons)

<sup>1</sup> She did not long survive after reaching home, for on March 9 she went down off the east coast of England.

became another victim of this submarine's mines. She had only just come out of Durazzo on her way to Valona with 104 sick cases on board when the explosion happened. Two of our drifters, *Hastings Castle* and *Selina* (who had recently been fitted with gear for mine-sweeping), were seeking these dangerous "eggs" and, noticing the accident, immediately slipped wires. Hurrying towards the stricken ship, they launched their small boats to pick up people from the water, and then steamed alongside *Marechiaro*. But the Italians lost their heads and would not take the lines which were thrown aboard, whereupon Robert J. Claxton, second engineer of the drifter *Selina*, climbed up the ship's side, got on board, made fast the ropes, and had exceptional trouble in persuading the Italians to get into the drifters. Claxton then searched round the lower decks of the sinking steamer and discovered her chief engineer helpless, with both legs broken above the knees. Summoning help from his own shipmates, Claxton carried the wretched man over the side to safety and then went on still searching. He came to a sick berth containing wounded Italians, again collected assistance, and had them removed. Finally, of the *Marechiaro's* invalids and crew there were rescued 112 people. As the Italian naval authorities later testified, almost all were saved, "thanks to the promptness and efficiency displayed by these drifters," although the choppy sea made it very difficult to lay alongside a sinking vessel. Every one of the sick had been rescued, two officers and about twenty-three of the Italian crew being lost.<sup>1</sup>

Not content with this piece of work, *Hastings Castle* and *Selina* carried out another fine service only two days later (23rd). Matters were becoming rather serious at Durazzo, thanks to a certain further Italian vacillation. The evacuation of their troops should not have been delayed, and now they realised that the Austrian military force were marching in greater strength than supposed: moreover, bringing with them 5-inch field-guns. The decision was therefore made to withdraw hurriedly, for these Austrian guns might be brought as far as the bridge which crossed the stream some 2000 yards east of the town. As part of the enemy's plan, UC-12 again laid mines on the 23rd off Durazzo, and altogether the garrison looked like being in a very tight corner.

Urgent orders came for more drifters, so at 4.30 on the afternoon of this date eighteen were despatched from Brindisi. That morning other small craft had also left Brindisi for Durazzo,

<sup>1</sup> Claxton was later awarded the Medalia d'Argento al Valor Militaire.

including the Italian trawler *Monzone* (which had been purchased from the French for mine-sweeping), and the ocean tug *Maritimo*. Before they could reach Durazzo they had both sunk on mines, but *Hastings Castle* with *Selina* managed to save some of the trawler's crew. Now all these drifters were to be employed for a day or two at maximum energy. One group had just come into Brindisi after twenty-six days operating off Valona, but within a few hours out they went again. For what were they needed ? It would be easier to enumerate the items that they were not asked to do. What with carrying troops from Durazzo pier to transports ; piloting the latter round the mine-field ; shooting their nets as a screen all the way from off Cape Laghi to Saseno Island, at Valona Bay, thence from Cape Linguetta down to Corfu ; searching for mines ; chasing U-boats ; together with numerous minor duties ; they were hard at it the whole time.

And we know from an undeniable source that these fishermen had become pretty efficient at their gunnery : both French and British submarines had to be very careful not to show themselves anywhere within range, or they risked being instantly attacked. On this selfsame day H.M. Submarine H-4 came into Brindisi with the report of having had forty shells fired at her : she stated that the drifters made excellent shooting, considering they were 5000 yards away. Luckily H-4 just avoided being hit, though she was straddled and the next rounds might have been fatal.

Enemy submarines were constantly being seen off Durazzo at this date, but their presence in the area Cattaro—Gulf of Drin—Durazzo was indicated by their *telefunken* wireless. One U-boat in particular cruised up to the north-north-east and back again from a position 20 miles west of Durazzo, and these were the risks which had to be accepted now that the Italian Government had definitely resolved to get the Durazzo garrison away. Everything was ready, the shallow-draught transports came back there, but they immediately had a curious effect : when the Austrian Army saw these steamers entering, our enemy imagined the ships were bringing Italian reinforcements, so that a retirement for a certain distance took place temporarily, which turned out to be a blessing for the Allies at a critical moment.

By the 24th a spell of bad weather had set in and made the exposed Durazzo anchorage quite impossible : no embarkation could be undertaken that day in the heavy sea running. This delay unfortunately enabled the Austrians to regain their initiative, surround the place, and mount guns on the surrounding

heights whence they could command the beach. Procrastination had brought the Italians no good, and that which could have been done a fortnight ago under easy circumstances now had to be attempted with haste and difficulty. On the 25th the embarkation began, and not without expectation of attack by sea and land. Whilst the drifters were guarding against submarines the netted channel southward towards Valona and Corfu, three Italian cruisers (*Libia*, *Puglia*, and *Agordat*) with some destroyers and three Italian auxiliary cruisers (*Citta di Siracusa*, *Citta di Cagliari*, and *Citta di Messina*) protected the embarkation just off the harbour, these vessels engaging the enemy's shore positions. Lest from Cattaro or Pola Austrian surface ships should sally out, there left Brindisi at 3 a.m. of the 26th the two Italian battleships *Regina Elena* and *Napoli* (each of 12,425 tons and 22 knots), accompanied by H.M.S. *Weymouth*, the Italian cruiser *Marsala*, as well as four destroyers, this force patrolling to the northward.

Daylight operations in getting troops off to drifters, and from drifters aboard transports, were not pleasant. By this time the enemy's field-guns were ranged on the pier and cruisers, so that within a short while the *Citta di Siracusa* was hit, three of her guns being dismounted, one man killed and five wounded. After the *Libia* opened fire the Austrians seemed to reply feebly. Aboard the latter cruiser had arrived Lieutenant-Commander Cochrane to take charge of the drifters, and at first a tug towed him shorewards in *Libia's* cutter; but so shallow is this exposed harbour that the tug could not get nearer than 500 yards from the pier, and landing could be effected only after the cutter rowed the remaining distance.

Certainly not an ideal embarkation port, and still worse now that the enemy dominated the encircling mountains. With only 4 feet of water at the stone pier, boat-work was essential and gave the Austrian gunners ample time to do their worst. Although the eastern side of this jetty was sandbagged, any embarkation was an immediate signal for shells to rain down upon the departing Italian troops. "One could see the effects of this fire," says Lieutenant-Commander Cochrane: "pits in the ground, and dead mules, with quantities of live ones standing round them—poor things." Thus it was not possible to make much headway until darkness, but 3000 troops actually were got away that night.

And another tragedy happened likewise. On the evening of the 25th Sub-Lieutenant H. B. Deakin, R.N.R., in the *Lily*

*Reiach*, who had already been a month working at Durazzo and knew the local mine-fields better than perhaps any other officer, was piloting in a group of drifters. It was now 6.30 p.m. and growing dark. Having got well into the bay, and given the drifters instructions to steer for a certain point, telling them to keep as close as possible to their next-ahead, Deakin finally turned sixteen points on his way back to rejoin his own group, which were farther outside. Alas ! within a few moments a terrible explosion rent the dusk, and the *Lily Reiach* was blown to atoms. The *Clach-Na-Cudin* (Skipper John Humphrey) was about one and a half lengths away. She immediately stopped, went full speed astern, launched her boat and picked up the cook, James Stephens, of St. Ives, Cornwall. The drifter *Floandi* likewise launched her boat, and the two remained some while rowing about the wreckage. Other voices could be heard, but quickly were stilled in death. No further survivors could be located, and Stephens' escape had been singularly lucky : whilst floating about in the swell and darkness he found a lifebuoy beside him, and a few minutes later his friends picked him up.

UC-12 had again scored by her visit of the 23rd. But her days were numbered. In less than three weeks her own punishment would come with a startling bang.

The final day for the Italians at Durazzo dawned on the 26th when their cruisers resumed shelling the heights, putting some of the enemy's guns out of action. Right to the end were drifters busy netting or bringing off the last 500 troops ; but it was nasty when from some spot just north of the town the Austrians fired shrapnel at the outer drifters, though the *Agordat* was forthwith ordered up to stop this with her guns, and succeeded most effectively. So the afternoon wore on. About 5 p.m. our Allies set fire to the town and squirted petrol at the houses, so that when the ammunition joined in the conflagration Durazzo presented a very impressive sight. Then, with the shades of night the last Italian officer and man, together with ten guns, had been taken aboard the transports by 6.30 p.m. To have removed 8500 people in a couple of nights, under the least favourable conditions of weather and attack, may well be regarded as good sound work. That afternoon one military officer and half a dozen soldiers had been killed by shrapnel, but altogether the losses were estimated at 600 killed, wounded, dead through cholera,<sup>1</sup> and prisoners. Several hundred horses and mules could

<sup>1</sup> According to one officer there were at Durazzo 800 cholera cases, of which 240 ended fatally.

not be embarked, and these were intentionally slaughtered. Thirteen bronze guns and a couple of anti-aircraft guns were destroyed to prevent them falling into Austrian hands. Nothing now remained but for the transports to leave, after which the drifters were to destroy any small boats left in the harbour and depart for Brindisi. Soon after midnight the eleven transports and hospital-ship weighed, bound south under escort. It was remarkable that not one was torpedoed, since the Italians failed to insist on any formation: the steamers just came along in twos or threes, racing each other. Still, all went well; one submarine sighted off Durazzo had been chased away by a destroyer, and soon after 10 a.m. of the 27th the transports were safe within Valona Bay. The drifters, too, had suffered no extensive damage in spite of having endured continuous fire. Apart from *Lily Reiach's* loss, only the *Selina* had been wounded, a shell penetrating her deck.

A sense of great relief spread over Brindisi, and Admiral Cutinelli considered the drifters had behaved splendidly: in truth, this final act concluding the months of evacuation was hailed as something of a victory. That it certainly was, though dilatoriness might have had serious results. Had the weather got worse, or the troops been less smartly put aboard, or the Austrians brought up more guns, a very different story would have to be told. We notice here also one of those few instances where naval bombardment of the enemy's shore effects any real benefit. The cruisers and auxiliary cruisers were able to keep Austrian guns under control for a sufficiently long period; but barely had the cavalcade steamed away than the enemy marched down and possessed Durazzo.

By the end of February an important transformation had thus come over the Adriatic. With the French firmly installed at Corfu, the Italians at Valona, Allied cruisers and destroyers at Brindisi, to say nothing of other forces at Venice and Taranto, there was little inducement for the Austrians to attempt raids for the present. Some special reason would have to arise which directly affected our enemies, and in due course we shall narrate how such an occasion did ripen. The winter of 1915-1916 had, once again in history, shown the value of superior sea-power which largely nullified most of the Austro-German-Bulgarian land successes in southern Europe. Without this naval strength nothing could have saved 130,000 Serbs from surrender or death. They were now rested, refitted, given a new



courage, and soon would find themselves round the corner at Salonika.

Thus the British drifters, who had been diverted from their original anti-submarine purpose for too long a time, could now get on with the war, spread their nets across the Straits between Cape Otranto and Saseno Island, whilst the cruisers could devote themselves solely to imposing the Adriatic blockade. The future accordingly looked like developing into stalemate in this sea, yet it was to be marked by spasms of excitement which would be intensified whenever German U-boats began to find their route into Cattaro seriously threatened. Especially active would continue the drifters, and their share in the Durazzo evacuation was presently recognised when our Italian Allies presented fifteen of them with 1000 lire each. Commander Hatcher, Lieutenant-Commander Cochrane, Lieutenant Fry, R.N.R., Lieutenant Rae, R.N.R., and Sub-Lieutenant Deakin (posthumously) were all awarded decorations by the King of Italy.

## CHAPTER XVI

### MINOR OPERATIONS

**A**LMOST against its will—and certainly contrary to all expectations—the Adriatic had taken on an importance of its own. During the early weeks of hostilities there had been no conspicuous action between Austrians and Anglo-French, nor after all these months had Anglo-Italian naval forces barely come to grips with the enemy. Chance, rather than design, had thrown the Serbian problem into the naval category, and the most difficult of all Adriatic problems (soon to loom still more serious)—the passage of German U-boats to or from Cattaro—was something that concerned Austria only very indirectly. Whilst the German Navy was not able to render Austria much assistance, it did make a convenience of Austrian ports; but even this development came fortuitously.

The initial reason why the first U-boat ever reached the Mediterranean had nothing to do with aiding the Austrians; and the subsequent arrival of other submarines from Germany by the sea route again was no self-denying project to strengthen Austria against the Allies' Adriatic blockade. Germany might have preferred Constantinople as her submarine base, and in some respects (e.g. miles of guaranteed safety from below Chanak Narrows, and all the way across the Marmara Sea, right to the Bosphorus) the Turkish capital would have been preferable after the Gallipoli evacuation. Certainly it would have been better placed for submarines engaged hindering troopships coming up and down the Aegean, for menacing the Salonika route, as also for making reconnaissances on behalf of *Goeben* and *Breslau*, who must surely make a sortie some day.

But, on the whole, Cattaro occupied geographically a fairly central position now that Germany's main southern motive was to attack the Mediterranean shipping lanes, no matter whether these ran east or west, north or south. There existed also the vague suspense that some day the Allies might make another attempt against the Dardanelles and succeed. Thus, from various combinations of circumstances, the Adriatic Sea could not be regarded

as a mere backwater : from it were to come those submarines whose warfare ripened into the deadliest and most devastating. An ever-increasing, yet never numerous, fleet of these small craft was able to do pretty much what it willed between Gibraltar and Port Said, southern France and north Africa, during three anxious years when lives of men and tonnage of ships went to the bottom almost daily. If only any one of the Allies could have barred the Otranto gate in 1916, so that no U-boat could get through, this would have done more good than all the careful routing, the patrols, the traps, and other anti-submarine measures which presently were enforced throughout the entire Mediterranean. The truth is, that we had not yet fully appreciated the full implications and terrible seriousness of the Otranto Straits, so that undivided and adequate efforts had still to be concentrated on this single matter of exit. Someday we should have to face it bluntly, when the task would by no means have become any easier or simpler ; at present reliance leaned chiefly on the most primitive methods, and the marvel is that these sustained the duty as well as they did.

For the attitude still survived that the U-boat was a nuisance, but not all-important as a menace ; that destroyers were wanted in more important areas, and could not be spared ; that weak drifters must do what they could, and hope for the best. But much worse than this were the unprofitable relations between French and Italians, and the wastage of material. Frankly, there existed too much bad blood between these two Latin races for perfect unity of purpose to be possible. Too much mutual mistrust, dislike, and jealousy made cohesion an impossibility. The Italians also lacked initiative, driving force, enthusiasm. " Personally," wrote one of the British naval officers at Brindisi, " I don't fancy the Italian Fleet want to attack anything." They were not accustomed to fleet work, avoided responsibility, preferred to preserve rather than risk their ships. There were, of course, notable exceptions, especially the Duke of the Abruzzi, who would gladly have served under any commander-in-chief if by so doing victory could have been helped.

The British managed to keep friendly with both Italians and French, liked better working with the latter, who were gallant and good seamen, though the French could not " stick it " at sea for long. It was always Sir Cecil Thursby's belief that some of the islands off the Dalmatian coast should have been attacked and seized : this would have meant a combined naval and military

expedition, but the Italian Government disapproved. The value of such an operation against Cattaro and Pola would have been beyond all estimation to the Allies' cause in the Mediterranean, though it needed a mind more than parochial to appreciate that much.

So the Adriatic situation now settled down to this : the British battleships at Taranto were maintained in readiness for some possible engagement with the Austrians, yet the former were precluded from going to sea for practice, since no destroyers were available as anti-submarine screen. In order to guard against surprise and have early warning of any movements by the Austrians, intelligence was gained north of Brindisi by our submarines, shore look-out stations, and occasional sweeps by cruisers as well as torpedo craft. A base at one of the Dalmatian islands would have been very desirable, and might also have led to a notable engagement. Our submarines stationed off Austrian Adriatic ports watching anything that happened, and waiting for opportunities, were doing good work. Contrariwise, the Italian coast was protected against raids by mines, small submarines, armoured trains, but especially by the cruisers and destroyers based on Brindisi.

In theory the Otranto drifter patrol, stretched across the Straits, seemed excellent : a straight line drawn on the chart from Saseno to Cape Otranto suggested an impenetrable wall for the submarines. Actually this netting required more drifters, and to be backed up by destroyers or armed motor craft at the best of times. But there were periods when many of the drifters were borrowed by our Allies, and destroyers were covering the movements of Italian troops, so that whereas the anti-submarine door should have been shut tight, locked, and barred, it sometimes did not exist.

Nevertheless, subject to the above conditions, some quite interesting happenings marked the ensuing weeks, and we shall do well to note them before passing on to watch the events shaping themselves in other sections of the manifold Mediterranean. First of all must be mentioned those bitterly disappointing episodes where the technical fault of some Whitehall official robbed a British submarine of its victory. Soon after midday on February 28 H.M. Submarine H-1 (Lieutenant Wilfrid B. Pirie, R.N.) was 10 miles west of Durazzo when she sighted an Austrian of the U-V type on the surface, stopped.

This "H" class was 164½ feet long, could do 10½ knots sub-

merged, and 13 knots on the surface. Built in America during the war, H-1 had crossed the Atlantic on her own bottom. Before coming to the Adriatic she had served at the Dardanelles, got through Chanak Narrows, and performed good work in the Sea of Marmara. Her armament consisted of four 21-inch torpedo-tubes. Now to-day Lieutenant Pirie seemed blest with a perfect target, flooded his tubes, got the enemy right ahead, and fired his lower starboard torpedo, not doubting to hit the Austrian just ahead of her conning-tower. On looking through his periscope the British commanding officer saw two men in the Austrian conning-tower, and the torpedo took the couple by quite complete surprise—as indeed it did Lieutenant Pirie. The aim was perfect, the missile went straight to the spot intended, but then it dived right under! The two men saw the track, their U-boat was turned towards H-1, and two minutes after the first attack the British crew could hear the sound of a torpedo's propellers pass about three feet over head. Ramming could not be done.

This Austrian submarine missed because H-1 was now further submerging, but when the British torpedo had run too deeply recent history had begun to repeat itself. In August 1914 H.M. Submarine D-5 was in the Heligoland Bight with one of the very ablest officers in command. He fired at the German cruiser *Rostock*, distant 600 yards—fired *both* torpedoes, made certain that no lack of professional care could hinder the target being holed. Nevertheless, on this, as certain other days when it was “a sitting-shot,” the torpedoes passed right under the vessel attacked. Why? Because the war-heads of our British torpedoes had been erroneously made 40 lb. heavier than the practice-heads we had used in exercises.<sup>1</sup>

Go back to the morning of February 17, when H-4 (Lieutenant H. E. Smyth, R.N.) had come from Brindisi half-way across towards Cape Rodoni. At 7.20 a.m. an enemy submarine was sighted, and just before 8 o'clock Lieutenant Smyth, from a distance of 700 yards, fired a couple of torpedoes, both of which ran straight. They were set for 5 feet, yet each dived *below* the enemy, whose draught if fully buoyant on the surface would be not less than 10 feet. There lay the Austrian on the surface—stopped—as before. A hit seemed certain beyond all possibility of doubt! But the impossible had happened. At least two

<sup>1</sup> Those who wish to pursue the subject will find it on p. 79 of *The Naval Memoirs of Admiral-of-the-Fleet Sir Roger Keyes* (London, 1934) and my *Amazing Adventure*, pp. 81–84.

Austrian submarine crews thus owed their lives to a terrible mistake by those in superior authority. "H-4 returned furiously angry," related one of our Brindisi officers. And the same indignation, mingled with bitter sorrow, was felt on several occasions when other of our submarines came back into harbour cruelly robbed of their prey.

By the beginning of March Italy had created half a dozen little submarines, which were the reason for both criticism and even sarcasm. The first three were sent by train to Venice, whilst two arrived by train at Brindisi. Their displacement was of only about 35 tons, and their best surface speed about 4 knots, but 2 knots when submerged, so their fighting value could scarcely be reckoned as high. The Italians had to endure a good deal of cynical remarks when some officer belonging to the British or French service would come along and waggishly suggest: "I understand these little boats were intended originally for defence of the outer harbour, but now are to protect the inner harbour?"

No cause for mirth were those terrible mines, which still were being laid by Austrian submarines, who could do only restricted harm now that targets were so rare. It is true that U-boats still persisted in hanging about off Durazzo and the Gulf of Drin, but they were far less likely to torpedo than to be torpedoed by one of the Allies' craft. On the other hand, so much traffic of cruisers, destroyers, and drifters went in and out of Brindisi; whilst additional troops were shortly being sent from Taranto across to Valona, to say nothing of the regular communications thither,<sup>1</sup> that the mining of such approaches would be better than a rash speculation.

Therefore on March 2 did UC-12 again lay a cargo 2½ miles off Brindisi, which was not long in affording results. At 8 o'clock next morning a group of drifters, that included the *Boy Harold*, came steaming in for their harbour rest when that vessel blew up with the loss of her skipper, and six others, only the second engineman with a deck-hand being saved. Five days later some more drifters were entering these approaches when the *Enterprise II* struck another mine, and down she disappeared with all hands except the skipper and mate, though two bodies were picked up. Later on some of the Brindisi drifters were set to sweep a channel through this danger area.

<sup>1</sup> By the beginning of March Italy had transported 50,000 of her troops to Valona, together with 120 guns. But only now the first 1600 of the Serbian horses were able to be sent on from Valona to Corfu, having been delayed by bad weather.

UC-12 by this period had enjoyed a fairly prosperous career since the railway brought her to the Adriatic from Germany. She had carried German agents, munitions, and money across to Africa for the purpose of rousing the Senussi ; she had laid mines off Durazzo, Brindisi, and Taranto ; but now at length came the day of reckoning. She had been unlucky to leave Cattaro on March 13, and three days later was off San Paolo Island by the entrance to Taranto. It was afternoon, suddenly a heavy explosion attracted patrol-boats to the spot, where they found both wreckage and oil. Next morning divers were sent down, who discovered a submarine ; but so terrible had the explosion been that she was cut in two halves. At the end of a week the fore portion was brought into harbour, followed later by the after half.

What had happened was this : UC-12 arrived off Taranto with twelve mines arranged in six forward compartments. Of this number she had just laid eight off the island, and they were subsequently recovered by the Allies. Two more were found still on board in the foremost compartment, but two others she managed to hit and thereby caused her destruction, with the loss of her people. Down went this two-part steel coffin till it rested on the sea-bed in 120 feet. There could be no question of her identity (since confirmed from other sources), for there was found " UC-12 " painted both on part of the machinery, and the pipes under her deck. Significant, too, was the message scribbled on a slate lying in the conning-tower.

" Telegraph immediately to Kiel," an officer had ordered the wireless rating.

Now the salvage of this useful minelayer created for the Italians no end of interest, and among other facts it was established that with a German crew, wearing German or Austrian colours as convenient, she had committed an illegal act : she had laid mines off the harbour belonging to a nation with which Germany was not yet at war. For some time it had been impossible to bring the guilt directly against that country, but now there could be no sort of question, and to-day we know that for a long while German submarines had operated against Italian interests. Not for five more months did any vital political effect manifest itself, but the anomaly of Italy being still at peace with Germany came to a conclusion when the former declared war against the latter on August 27. By December of this same year (1916) the Italian dockyard at Taranto had joined the submarine's two halves, made such a good job of her refit, that on the 9th she was launched

like to a new boat. Changing her nationality, and her number to XI, our ally had thus been given a free present and honour had been avenged.

Nevertheless, if one dangerous foe had been disposed of on March 16, a second displayed uncommonly fine skill on the 18th. At 1 a.m. to-day H.M.S. *Dartmouth* had left Brindisi for a sweep up the Adriatic, having under her orders the three French destroyers *Commandant Bory*, *Boutefeu*, *Renaudin*, with the two Italian destroyers *Insidioso* and *Bronzetti*. The idea was that the destroyers should go searching for enemy submarines who might be expected during the night to be on the surface charging their batteries or resting, whilst *Dartmouth* should cover these operations. It was an excellent idea, one that promised likely results, and might with any luck succeed in catching one or two of these pests unexpected.

Alas ! no such fortune turned out. On the contrary the *Renaudin* at 8 a.m., when 7 miles to the west of Durazzo, was attacked by the Austrian submarine U-VI. The latter's commanding officer (Lieutenant von Falkenhausen) certainly proved his high professional ability this morning. Although the *Renaudin* was steaming at 23 knots, von Falkenhausen hit the Frenchman right in the engine-room, and the destroyer broke in two, foundering with the loss of captain and many of his men, but about thirty-two were saved by another of the destroyers. The action had occurred just as the watch on board *Renaudin* was being changed, which accounted for so many men being down below, and only one man in the engine-room survived.

U-VI was fitted with two bow torpedo-tubes, and carried four torpedoes, her speed on the surface being about 10 knots, and 8 knots below water, her displacement during the former condition was 235 tons, and 273 when submerged. She had triumphed over her physical limitations, and unquestionably hers must be regarded as a fine victory—not merely for its technical excellence, but for its discouraging effect on measures taken against U-boats. Out went the French submarine *Papin*, determined to avenge *Renaudin's* loss, but the expedition failed, nor did U-VI receive her punishment till another two months had elapsed, and even then it was the British drifters who defeated her.

Each side kept the other alert during these days of surprises. Winter had passed, both the 19th and 20th of March were beautiful days along the Adriatic, and seemed suited for aviation work. Therefore on the former came aeroplanes from Valona flying up



the coast to make a reconnaissance of Durazzo, and find out exactly what the Austrian military forces were about, but a spring fog, with the warmer weather, frustrated these efforts and concealed the land. A few hours later, after darkness settled down and the coast was brushed clear by brilliant moonlight, Austrian aeroplanes hastened south, and arrived off Valona at midnight to see just what Italian troops were doing. Then, gliding over Valona's harbour, they dropped bombs, of which one exploded within 3 yards of the Italian destroyer *Bersaglieri*, and blew a hole, measuring about 10 feet by 7 feet, in her engine-room, so that she had to be beached to prevent being sunk. As *Bersaglieri* happened not to be under way, with no one in the engine-room, she had no casualties.

To all this Adriatic warfare there came varieties of incidents, several not without humour and others tragi-comical. Partial relief from the round of hard work and anxiety was found this March when the British Squadron at Brindisi held a regatta, at which both Admiral Cutinelli and Sir Cecil Thursby were present. Keen competition was displayed in the rowing race for cutters with seamen crews, and everyone came to watch the result, confident that the prize would fall to one of the light cruisers. Out came the drifter men in a cast-off cutter that once belonged to H.M.S. *Topaze*. With an enormous "Jolly Roger" flying at the bows, and hefty fishermen at the oars, this boat entered the contest and acquitted herself so well that she passed the line a good first. The win seemed to be popular, the crowd most enthusiastic, and perhaps the drifter men might even have increased their laurels to-day but for the kindness of Admiral Cutinelli. Delighted to encourage the winners, who in active service had done so many fine things this winter, the Italian Commander-in-Chief was gracious enough to send over from his flagship to the "Jolly Rogers" three bottles of champagne, which is a drink that North Sea herring-fishers do not normally consume. Result? This effectively prevented them winning any more races that day, though they did get a "second."

In contrast with such diversions were those mistakes which some of our Allies occasionally made at sea. One night this March H.M.S. *Liverpool* had gone out to support another destroyer reconnaissance off the Albanian coast, when she found herself fired upon by the Italian destroyers. Luckily *Liverpool* was not hit, nor did she return the fire, as she realised what had happened. It had been entirely the mistake of Admiral Cutinelli's craft, who

erroneously entered the cruiser's allotted area. Much more serious was the error of the French submarine *Ampère*, which torpedoed an Austrian hospital-ship. The latter had to be beached, but neither sick nor wounded were aboard at the time, and no casualties happened from the regrettable affair. The Austrians protested by wireless, and a quite unintentional act had the appearance of being done in revenge for the *Renaudin*.

From the beginning of April the centre of interest shifted south of Otranto Straits, and we witness the logical results of the past winter. On the first of this month a fresh phase opened when two Italian steamers, *Egeo* and *Reposto*, were torpedoed 20 miles east of Cape Alice (southern end of the Taranto Gulf) by one of the big U-boats from Germany. Possibly she may have received orders also to keep a look-out for UC-12, which had been missing during the last fortnight, and might have got ashore in the Taranto Gulf. At any rate the big German was seen in that area and was heard calling up, by her powerful wireless, Cattaro base some 120 miles away.

Now at a conference of the Allies' senior admirals, held from March 2-9 in Malta, the possibility had been discussed of the Austrian Fleet making a sortie and rushing through the Straits to join hands with the Turks. Such an undertaking seemed remote, though not quite impossible; but certainly the combination of this fleet with *Goeben* and *Breslau*, under an enterprising German admiral, would have the most serious effect on the Aegean. The Italians were especially nervous lest the Austrians might dash out of the Adriatic before news reached the Allies.

So Argostoli was chosen as a suitable place for the French Battle Fleet to arrive from Malta. Stationed at the south-east end of the sea, which separates Italy from eastern Europe, the French *armée navale* would thus occupy a good strategical position for crossing the enemy's approach; wherefore the French took possession of the place on April 6, and the Greeks could do nothing except protest against their territory being thus treated. Argostoli lies on the southern side of Cephalonia, largest of the Ionian Islands. The long inlet, with plenty of deep water, provided a first-class roadstead for the biggest fleet, needing only to be protected by nets across the entrance. Hither came the Gallic battleships, and a new telegraph cable was laid.

On April 11 was completed the last stage of the Serbian evacuation from Valona to Corfu, that is to say the remaining 13,000 troops together with 10,000 horses. Thus ended the last chapter

in that long story which began over four months previously at San Giovanni di Medua and Durazzo. Meanwhile the French, under General Mondésir, had performed almost a miracle, and one of the most notable transformations in all the war. By their ardent efforts had they changed the Serbian Army from a miserable half-starved rabble into a renovated fighting machine, with new uniforms and equipment, so that the regiments were now well drilled, smart in appearance, morally and physically restored to a high standard. Refitted with rifles, guns, munitions, and all the material for modern warfare, the Serbs were again ready to take their part in European hostilities, this time under General Sarraill.<sup>1</sup>

But in what manner could 125,000 troops be conveyed to Salonika? Soldiers, however gallant and enduring on shore, are completely out of their element afloat, and in time of war show their uneasiness. How often during the period 1914-1918 was this demonstrated when British khaki crowds from the trenches were crossing the narrow English Channel! It was the same with French soldiers who had to cross the Mediterranean as with the Serbs: they had much keener dread of the voyage by sea than all the horrors of land-fighting.

The safest route would have been to steam the Serbs down from Corfu to Patras, there get into trains, and thus be carried most of the way through Greece to Salonika; but the Greek Government on April 3 finally refused to grant permission. It would have avoided the submarine area off the southern extremity of Greece—that unenviable locality between Cape Matapan and Crete—if even the Corinth Canal had been available, and this saving of distance would have shortened the number of hours on passage considerably. But the largest steamer which ever navigated that 3-mile artificial waterway was of only 5311 nett tons with a draught of 17½ feet: the canal would not therefore be suitable for the Serbian cavalcade. Thus no other alternative presented itself than to make use of the outside sea route, round the Pelonnesus and up the Aegean; the total distance between Corfu and Salonika being 550 miles.

It was on April 12 that the operation of moving for the last occasion all these thousands was set going under the direction of the French Rear-Admiral de Gueydon. From Brindisi some British drifters, together with several of the motor lighters from the Aegean (at one time used for landing on Gallipoli), were sent to Corfu so as to assist in putting the Serbs aboard transports.

<sup>1</sup> *La Guerre Navale dans La Méditerranée*, pp. 37-38.

Five Italian armed liners, fifteen French steamers, together with British and Italian vessels for the horses, were arranged in convoys according to their speed categories, escorted by torpedo craft. Whilst trawlers patrolled the various zones through which the transports must pass, two squadrons of French battleships (=12 units) remained anchored at Argostoli to exercise the same silent formidability that the Grand Fleet within Scapa Flow was displaying against the High Sea Fleet.

The Argostoli move, so recently made, certainly justified itself during the Corfu-Salonika trips, which needed from forty-seven to fifty-five hours apiece, according to whether the convoy were slow or fast. The Austrian surface ships dared not come forth and risk what would have been a determined fleet engagement; yet the temptation to fall upon these troop-steamers, destroy the Serbian Army which had eluded them all these months by land and sea, must have been difficult to resist. Not one convoy was attacked, although this series of trips continued till the last day of May, by which date the 125,000 Serbian soldiers disembarked at Salonika unhurt. That enemy submarines had been frustrated completely during so many weeks through danger zones seemed scarcely credible when the French called to mind that such aces as Arnauld de la Perière in U-35 were about. Had he not sunk that big French liner *Provence* (13,753 tons) on February 25 off Cape Matapan? She was carrying troops bound from France to Salonika, and of these 1800 no fewer than 1100 were lost.

But when the French Commander-in-Chief, Vice-Admiral Dartige du Fournet, borrowed twenty-four of our drifters (sixteen for use at Argostoli and eight at Corfu); whilst four more were guarding and repairing nets at Valona Bay, and two others (the *Ned Salmon* with the *King Herring*) had been lent to the Italians to make daily sweeps for mines off the Brindisi entrance; this meant that thirty out of the seventy-four British drifters based on Brindisi had been prevented from carrying out their particular job—netting the Otranto Straits. Deduct another seven from the available forty-four (to allow for units resting or sent round to Taranto for refit) and we find just half the full number available. Thus only one portion of the Straits at this time presented any inconvenience to de la Perière and his brother commanding officers.

Except for 5 to 10 miles from the shore on either side, the depth of water in the Straits between Cape Otranto and Saseno Island varies from about 200 to nearly 500 fathoms (or 1200 to



FRENCH BATTLESHIP IN THE AEGEAN  
 Note the early form of camouflage in the false bow-wave.



FRENCH FLAGSHIP *PROVENCE*  
 At Corfu.



KASTRO HARBOUR, IMBROS



A GREEK CAIQUE  
One of the typical Aegean coasting craft.

3000 feet), though it was impossible in those days to foretell accurately how deeply a U-boat would normally care to dive without injuring her hull. It is true that in September 1917 U-58 off Queenstown went down even to 258 feet and came up again without being crumpled by the pressure ; yet this steepness had been involuntary and she was out of control. More probably, reasoned the British experts so late as April 1916, a U-boat would not care to travel below 150 feet for choice, so the Adriatic drifters were now using nets 140 feet deep, which they submerged another 12 feet from the surface. The practical value of this we are now to observe.

Hitherto these hard-worked drifters had received little enough encouragement. Eight had been lost since they came out from England : two by U-boats and six by mines. Against these figures they could claim to have saved many a life, and to have had more than one submarine in their nets. Not one U-boat, however, had they definitely sunk, and this notwithstanding their strenuous periods of ten days at sea with only three to four days in harbour. Were they never going to experience an occasion when an enemy craft could be caught beyond all argument and no Court of Inquiry could gainsay them ? It was worth hoping and toiling for the prize of £1000, apart from winning universal approval and becoming the envy of all Brindisi ; but the one undeniable bit of evidence would have to be the production of German or Austrian prisoners.

So we come to the night of May 13, 1916. The drifters were doing their restricted job in the Straits, and at 9.15 p.m. one group (stationed 12 miles east-north-east of Cape Otranto) received a surprise. The *Calistoga* had just finished getting her nets into position when Skipper William Stephens noticed that an indicator buoy on the sixth net fired, and so great a strain was put on the warp as to tow *Calistoga's* head round. Something both heavy and powerful had certainly fouled the nets. Stephens took a bearing of the buoy, found it altering rapidly, and made doubly sure there was no mistake this time. He fired a signal to inform the other drifters, slipped nets, and went steaming after the buoy.

About 1000 yards to the south-west lay the drifter *Dulcie Doris*, whose skipper happened to be down below, but the Mate called him to come on deck. For just before the *Calistoga's* rocket went up *Dulcie Doris'* Mate observed his own indicator buoy register, so this lot of nets was slipped likewise, and away chased *Dulcie Doris* too. All doubt and uncertainty were banished when 500



yards away she saw the hull of a submarine rise to the surface, tangled hopelessly among the nets and one propeller fouled : it seemed far too good, after all these months and evasions, to be true, but the drifter men were on to the enemy like a pack of hounds that have been too long a time kept at bay. *Dulcie Doris* immediately opened fire at point-blank range, whilst the *Evening Star II*, on seeing the cigar-like craft ascending from the sea, let go her nets and began shelling as fast as her gun could be worked. *Calistoga* could not use hers because the other drifters were in line of fire.

It was a glorious occasion—the very ideal for which these fishermen had almost got tired of desiring. This engagement lasted but five minutes, and it was fierce rather than scientific : there is even some doubt as to whether one shell ever hit the target. That did not matter because the shower of steel fell so near as to convince the enemy of their peril : in a few minutes their submarine would be holed as well as tangled. The game was up, the drifters had defeated them to a standstill.

What then ?

Whilst a German engineer hurriedly opened the submarine's valves to sink her rather than allow her to become a prize, his shipmates got into the water and began swimming about. Boats were launched from the drifters, who picked up the captain (Lieutenant von Falkenhausen) and his two officers, together with seventeen men ; for this was the Austrian U-VI which only a few weeks ago had sunk the destroyer *Renaudin*. Thus not the French submarine service but the British drifters had wrought vengeance. The prisoners were German, even if the boat was Austrian ; and apart altogether from the grievous pain which every commanding officer in peace or war suffers at being robbed of his ship, von Falkenhausen's entry into an Italian harbour aboard a small fishing steamer was not in keeping with his proud spirit. All the skill and cool pluck by which he had struck *Renaudin*, the ensuing praise and glory, the freedom to roam the Adriatic and torpedo where he willed—this had suddenly been taken from him.

Only yesterday he had come out from Cattaro, bound south towards the Mediterranean, avoiding the Valona side (where annoying nets were certain to exist), and keeping near the Italian shore, yet sufficiently distant to have 200 or 300 fathoms under him. Then he had fouled two lots of British nets, spent most of half an hour endeavouring to get free, narrowly escaped death,



and delivered himself dripping into the hands of his adversaries. True, he had sighted in the fast-fading light one of the drifters and dived to avoid her, but in so doing he became enmeshed, and when he rose to cut these steel wires adrift, it was to find himself surrounded by powerful lights. Nothing remained for him to do after ordering the flooding valves to be opened and the men to put on their lifebelts.

This was not to be the last occasion during the war when a German submarine crew surrendered themselves to drifters without a suspicion of any struggle. Of course the shock of immersion is calculated to upset warriors' morale, especially by night; yet it is surprising that never once did a U-boat's captured crew show the slightest sign of enterprise in the direction of struggle and escape. Three officers and seventeen men! That would mean six or seven prisoners to each of three drifters, and the latter carried a crew of only eleven. One of these would be down below at his engines during any watch, perhaps two in the wheel-house, and one on deck looking out. I am sure that half a dozen British submarine survivors, if properly led and enthused, would have tried to overcome the watch, seize engine-room and wheel-house, lock up or shoot their captors, and steam off under cover of darkness. Germany had plenty of gallant people, such as Count von Luckener (of *Seeadler* fame), who would never have allowed themselves to be brought into Brindisi. Hurrying away during the night in the direction of Durazzo, the captured drifters would have eventually sighted an Austrian submarine and been escorted triumphantly into Cattaro. Instead of this the twenty were transferred from drifters to H.M.S. *Weymouth*, where they were given dry clothes and food, after which Captain Addison handed them over to the Italian authorities.

U-VI had been built at Fiume in 1909, having two petrol engines of 250 horse-power. She had a radius of 62 miles when submerged, and rarely spent more than three days at sea. Some interesting facts were obtained from one of the officers, which filled in several gaps that needed knowledge. It was confirmed that the French submarine *Curie*<sup>1</sup> (which had tried to enter Pola) had been caught in the net, also that on coming too near the shore she had been hit by one of the Pola batteries, killing her third officer. An illuminating statement had reference to the cruiser action of December 29, when Captain Seitz's *Helgoland* managed to escape at night back to Cattaro. According to the officer from

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter II.

U-VI, *Helgoland* was hit in the after boiler-room, and her captain on arriving in harbour received a reprimand from the Austrian Commander-in-Chief for not having used his destroyers to launch an attack after dark against the Anglo-Italian cruisers. But the hard steaming during those exciting hours had necessitated the retubing of *Helgoland's* boilers, just as *Goeben* suffered injury in 1914 during her forced run from the Mediterranean to the Sea of Marmara.

The risks and price of high-speed raids had been brought home to the Austrians very plainly, and their reluctance to embark on such venturesome excursions can well be appreciated ; nevertheless the possibility of some short and sudden outburst down the coast at a selected moment could not be entirely ruled out, and this suspense kept the Anglo-Italian-French naval forces ever on the alert. But the first phase of the Adriatic campaign closed on the last day of May 1916, which coincided with the final transference of the Serbian Army. The drifters had definitely convinced both the Austrians and the British Admiralty that nets could under certain conditions do all which was claimed for them, for which cause their lordships awarded the sum of £1000 to be divided between *Calistoga*, *Dulcie Doris*, and *Evening Star II*. How the Austrian mind reacted to the loss of U-VI must be deferred till some chapters later, and it was very obvious that our enemy intended to give the North Sea men a rough time.

That, however, would involve a problem for the new British Admiral at Taranto. Rear-Admiral Sir Cecil Thursby had already been offered, and accepted, command of the Eastern Mediterranean Squadron up the Aegean, so that Rear-Admiral Mark Kerr, C.B., M.V.O., on May 25 succeeded him in command of the British Adriatic Squadron.

## CHAPTER XVII

### MEDITERRANEAN DRAMA

**N**OW that we have seen the Adriatic situation developed, let us come farther south into the Mediterranean and note the drama being acted to the west and in the east.

With six of Germany's ablest submarines already arrived and operating by November 1915 it was pretty obvious that the Allies were to spend anxious weeks that would display many weak spots in their strategy and organisation. It is true that the pioneer Hersing at the end of September took U-21 up to Pola, where she remained for extensive overhaul till the end of January 1916, but in the meanwhile von Heimburg in UB-14 occupied his place. So, also, when at the end of 1915 Commander Kophamel became Senior Officer of Submarines at Pola, he was succeeded in U-35 by one more expert than even himself.

From the beginning of November, indeed, the Mediterranean U-boat campaign against every sort of Allied shipping quickly displayed its fierceness. Whilst the first two arrivals from the North Sea, U-34 (Rücker) and U-35 (Kophamel), this autumn sank five vessels (including the French armed merchant cruiser *Indien* at anchor off Rhodes), and also did valuable work carrying munitions to the Senussi; the second pair, U-39 (Forstmann) and U-33 (Gansser), after their sinkings *en route* to Cattaro, wasted little time in showing their aggressiveness as well by gun-fire as by torpedoes. The reader will recollect that exactly one month after her first arrival at Cattaro did U-39 sink the drifter *Restore* in the Otranto Straits. She specialised for a while in Eastern waters<sup>1</sup>—first of all off Crete and in the Aegean, where she torpedoed the British S.S. *Norseman* (9542 tons) on January 22, 1916, off Salonika—but in May of that year was sent to the Algerian coast and the neighbourhood of Napoleon's Elba, despatching ten British steamers to the bottom besides a number of Italian vessels. As for U-33 (Gansser), he was working this autumn (1915) along the Malta-Port Said route, destroying in

<sup>1</sup> U-39, at 6.30 a.m. on December 6 north-west of Alexandria, sank the Greek S.S. *L. G. Goulandris*, giving the master a certificate signed by Forstmann.

just over a fortnight no fewer than fourteen vessels, including the British S.S. *Clan Macleod* (4796 tons), 100 miles east-south-east of Malta. That occurred on December 1, and there was an ugly incident which British seafarers have not forgotten : when this steamer, after trying to escape during a period of two hours, finally gave up and the crew were taking to the boats, Gansser fired on them, killing twelve besides wounding others.

Now it was this ruthless brutality which had marked Valentin's arrival along the Mediterranean from Germany in U-38 at the very beginning of November ; but it was also the opportunity for a fine display of British pluck. On October 26 the S.S. *Woodfield* (3584 tons) had left Avonmouth transporting for our Army a cargo of mechanical vehicles and thirty-one soldiers, her sole defence being one 3-pounder gun. All went well, however, till she passed through Gibraltar Straits and at 7.15 a.m. of November 3 was some 40 miles east-south-east of Ceuta, that is to say off the coast of Morocco. She then sighted, 5 miles distant, a submarine which a quarter of an hour later hoisted the signal " Abandon ship immediately," firing across *Woodfield's* bows.

Captain A. K. Jones, the steamer's master, was a real sailorman. The *Woodfield* was not a passenger ship, so he could take a certain amount of risk in his endeavour to deliver for the Army the cargo entrusted him. Turning stern on to the enemy, he went full speed ahead, and at 7.55 a.m. with his little 3-pounder replied to Valentin's U-38. The latter was 210 feet long, with one 4.1-inch gun forward of the conning tower and another aft, besides a machine-gun mounted in the conning tower itself. She also had a surface speed of 14 knots.

A running fight now ensued, during which the German was careful to keep outside the 3-pounder's range ; yet both as to armament and speed the *Woodfield* was most unevenly matched. Pluckily the latter made the best of things rather than surrender, but her shells did not reach the target. Meanwhile Valentin's wrathful indignation waxed exceedingly great and he determined to overpower Captain Jones by superior gun-power—a task that would not be too difficult. At 8.15 a.m. *Woodfield* received a shell which penetrated her side and made a serious hole in the port bunker below water-line. Then came another which burst in the soldier's quarters, killing four of them at once ; another burst near the bridge, fatally wounding the carpenter and injuring Captain Jones. Finally, after eight men had been killed and about a dozen wounded, the time being now about 8.30 a.m.,

*Woodfield's* master saw that it were useless to contend further against such bullying. He would have to give in.

He therefore stopped engines and sent everyone off in the ship's boats except Phillips, the gunner, who could not very well be moved at present, being seriously wounded but also quite dazed; and him Captain Jones tended for a while. Imagine this deserted, stricken ship rolling sluggishly to the Mediterranean swell, and getting lower every minute as the water poured into her. U-38 was still some distance astern, nor need she do any more damage, for the tragedy looked sufficiently complete, and the two men would soon find themselves in the sea.

Just then the Captain glanced up and was surprised to notice a soldier named Wand, who also had been badly knocked about and his arm was broken. "What're you doing on board?" demanded Captain Jones. "Why didn't you leave with the others?"

Wand replied that his chum had been wounded, and he could not forsake him. Wherefore the Captain went with Wand to see what could be done, but when they reached that corner of the *Woodfield* the suffering friend had died. So the minutes ticked by, and these three men shared a great loneliness till the next phase began at 10.15 a.m. Valentiner had now submerged and played for safety. No longer on the surface, he took up a position a long way off on the steamer's starboard beam and took aim with deliberation.

"Two periscopes!"

Captain Jones barely had time to see them than he caught sight of a torpedo rushing towards his ship. Telling Wand and Phillips to hurry forward, he joined them at the fore well in the moment the missile struck *Woodfield* amidships. A terrible explosion shattered the hull, sending up a column of water and coal 200 feet into the air. It was now time to quit or go down with the ship forthwith, so the trio got a raft over the side, only to discover it not to be big enough for them all. Captain Jones accordingly placed the gunner and soldier therein, after which he dived into the sea and swam to another raft some 60 yards away. They were all picked up by one of the steamer's boats in charge of the mate.

Then rose from the water U-38, and Valentiner's voice was heard summoning the unfortunate people alongside: they looked up disconsolately at the citadel-like conning-tower, and the three guns. Next the Germans borrowed the boat, one of

Valentiner's officers and one of *Woodfield's* crew were sent off to the steamer for the ship's papers, for she still floated ; but Captain Jones had seen to it that there were no confidential documents, and the enemy obtained only the log-book. Perhaps it was disappointment, perhaps a delayed breakfast hour, or perhaps annoyance at having been put to such a chase, which made Valentiner so extremely unpleasant this November morn.

"What for you fire der damned gun ?" he inquired through an interpreter.

"Yes," answered Captain Jones, "and why have you killed those men ? Why did you afterwards fire at the boats ?"

The German replied that the steamer was in the sun, and he could not see. So now he proceeded to complete his job and sank her by gunfire, after which a patch of smoke showed itself on the horizon, and this induced Valentiner off to the north-west. Handing the survivors a bottle of brandy, and promising he would give news about them to the first ship, he submerged to the conning-tower, and motored off. Thus, when left to themselves, the fifty-seven sailors and soldiers, deprived of the dead carpenter and seven soldiers, were rowing about in *Woodfield's* four boats (port and starboard lifeboats and two gigs) about midway between Gibraltar and coast of Morocco, with no home but the alternatives of starvation or falling into the hands of Moors : not a pleasant contemplation in either case, following after the morning's excitement.

Nevertheless these men were mercifully preserved from death caused by thirst or hunger. Twenty-four of them in the starboard lifeboat reached Alhucemas ; twenty-one in the two gigs reached the African coast at Penon de la Gomera ; and for all of these everything went well. But the remaining twelve in the port lifeboat, comprising ten soldiers with only a couple of sailors, gained the shore near Igraiche, where they fell among the Bocoya tribe of Moors, who took them captive. This seemed uncommonly bad luck, but as prisoners they had to remain for a whole month till the Spanish Government negotiated with the Moors for their release. The twelve were then conveyed eastwards along this north African shore by a Spanish gunboat to Melilla. They had been well treated, although some were still suffering from their wounds whilst others were ill with dysentery. At this Spanish colonial port they found their forty-five former shipmates interned, but ere long the whole crowd were removed from Africa across to Spain at Malaga. Nor could this internment be suffered inter-

minably, and during February Captain Jones, together with his officers and some others, made their escape, finally reaching Plymouth that same month.

Thus many a soldier had his full experience of trials and adventures long previous to reaching the battlefield. On this same afternoon at 2 p.m. U-38 encountered a second British transport in much the same area ; in fact, hers was probably the smoke which had attracted Valentiner towards the north-west. This S.S. *Mercian* (6305 tons) had left Gibraltar that morning at 8 o'clock full of troops, and Valentiner began his usual tactics of shelling, incidentally making some excellent shooting. This quite unnerved the soldiers (and again we would emphasise the helpless discomfort of land warriors at sea passing through a danger area) so that a certain amount of panic occurred. But the *Mercian's* master by good seamanship zigzagged skilfully enough to avoid many if not all the shells. He could not call up assistance, since his wireless had been shot away, but on being relieved at the wheel by a soldier he was able to use machine-guns so effectively that he repelled Valentiner after  $1\frac{1}{2}$  terrific hours, during which U-38 fired one hundred shells, twenty-three men had been killed, and fifty wounded. Not without great difficulty *Mercian* put into Oran for repairs, but he had saved most of his passengers and extricated his ship from a tight situation. For this fine bit of work he was decorated with the Distinguished Service Cross, and given a commission as Lieutenant R.N.R.

If Valentiner had learnt by these two actions that British master mariners were likely to make a good deal of resistance before losing their ships, it was just as well. Perhaps U-boat commanding officers did not always realise the righteous anger, the contempt as seamen for the whole German submarine service ; nor will that spirit be ended until the last of those mercantile officers has gone aloft. It needed a pretty cool head, first-class courage, and the best sort of leadership to behave as did the captains in the *Woodfield* and *Mercian*.

Less fortunate were the troops aboard the French S.S. *Calvados* (1658 tons), which became a victim to Valentiner on the following day (November 4<sup>th</sup>) near to Oran. Bound for this port, she had come from Marseilles with a battalion of dusky Senegalese troops. Unarmed, unequipped with wireless, she was a perfect and ideal gift for a foe such as U-38 who did exactly as he pleased. She went down with the loss of 740 men, and this incident caused such a sensation that all navigation between France and Algeria

had to be suspended for a time, whilst on shore numerous complaints were provoked as to the measures for preventing recurrence of such a disaster. Alas! neither then, nor for many a long month, did the Allies realise that security could be found along the Mediterranean—never by sending vessels independently and unescorted, but together in a convoy, escorted, and along a carefully selected route. It was mere folly to believe that a single, slow-speed merchant steamer with, or without, one small gun could possibly elude a 14-knot U-boat with a couple of 4·1-inch guns, to say nothing of the latter's torpedoes.

That Valentiner was consistently lacking in those qualities which one associates with a chivalrous, honourable foe is shown not merely by his firing on the Italian liner *Ancona* (8210 tons) a few days later, whilst passengers and crew were taking to the boats, causing the loss of 208 lives; but by his torpedoing, without warning, the P. & O. liner *Persia* (7974 tons) on December 30, 1915, between Crete and Port Said. This callous act, which sent 334 people, including the master, to their death, roused protests that went echoing round the world, and did not help to win for Germany any sympathy in neutral countries.

But Valentiner had further compromised his country by flying Austrian colours when firing in the S.S. *Ancona*. Italy was not yet at war with Germany, so that this officer had no sort of right to attack the former's shipping, quite apart from this steamer being a passenger-ship. The Austrian ensign was employed in order to cover the breach of an undertaking by Germany and allow the latter's ally to suffer the blame. For this autumn submarine intensity along the Mediterranean synchronised with a temporary quiet period in north European waters. Why?

The reason is that the United States, although still neutral, were already exercising notable pressure. The sinking this year, first of the *Lusitania*, then of the *Arabic*—both off the Irish coast—caused diplomatic relations to become strained, and Germany was compelled to promise that passenger-ships should be exempt from submarine attack. Thus we find that from September 24, 1915, till December 20 of that year, no U-boats in northern waters made any sinkings. The brief sharp interlude of activity towards the end of December was inspired by a special reason, but thereafter this quietness went on till March 1, 1916, when Germany began her extended submarine campaign.

Thus, rather than risk seriously offending the Americans by some unfortunate error, our late enemy were compelled for



several months to hold up their torpedoings and gun-attacks (though not their mine-laying) around the British Isles. But this international difficulty afforded an excellent opportunity to transfer the cleverest U-boat captains south into the Mediterranean, where American passengers would not be likely to be travelling in any steamer. Valentiner's action in respect of the *Ancona* and *Arabic* was a plain flouting of the agreement which Germany had made with Washington, and showed how little could our late enemy be trusted.

Valentiner's violation not merely called forth another protest from America—thereby gradually preparing a neutral nation to become anti-German in deed no less than word—but was one of the influences which (culminating in the UC-12 affair)<sup>1</sup> made Italy declare herself one of Germany's enemies. A less tactful series of proceedings, or more lacking in imagination, no Teutonic recklessness could have brought about: yet there was one subtle gesture which puzzled us at the time, and could not be quite appreciated until after the war.

Those of us who were serving off the Irish coast in 1915 remember that on Christmas and three following days there came a sudden submarine visitation after three months of quiet. A transport, an oil-tanker, a Leyland liner, were all torpedoed with surprising celerity, and you could follow the enemy's track from the Irish Sea westwards to the Fastnet by the very positions of his attacks. What was the meaning of four-days' spasm, and then two more uneventful months? Most of us at the time believed that some U-boat on her way towards the Mediterranean just took the opportunity of hitting out wherever he sighted any sort of target—and then continued his journey down the Bay of Biscay. To-day we know on the authority of the German Captain Gayer that this Christmas surprise had been designed for a special purpose. Our enemy feared that as a result of the signal successes by Hersing, Rücker, Kophamel, Forstmann, Gansser, and Valentiner, Britain would really do something about it: in fact transfer her anti-submarine organisation from the British Isles to the Mediterranean. Evidently to the German Admiralty this seemed quite a possibility after such a quiet autumn.

But to have despatched from the north some hundreds and hundreds of destroyers, drifters, trawlers, sloops, and other

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XVI.

small surface vessels for patrolling the Mediterranean trade-routes might have meant too serious a threat against the campaign which had opened so promisingly ; and for this reason Germany must let us be under no disillusion. If, owing to American diplomatic pressure, it had been recently considered advisable to keep U-boats away from the routes along which Atlantic liners approached English ports, this must not be thought to signify complete and permanent withdrawal. In other words, Germany considered far too many potential anti-submarine vessels had already assembled<sup>1</sup> in the Latin Lake, and the British Admiralty had better keep the rest of their forces in Home Waters.

It was Lieutenant-Commander Schneider on which the choice fell to carry out this reawakening, and the selection was sound. Had he not been the officer who torpedoed on New Year's Day the British battleship *Formidable*, and afterwards became a specialist for operations off Ireland ? Was it not he who had sunk the *Arabic*, and knew where shipping would most likely be found ? On this Christmas occasion his orders definitely forbade him from sinking passenger ships or neutrals, yet his brief visit (as we have observed) had its own reward—even if the transport did not sink for two days, the oil-tanker for some hours, and the Leyland liner though damaged kept afloat. But two other steamers were sent to the bottom off Lundy Island.

The nett result of all this was exactly as the enemy wished : our patrols were for the most part kept on as hitherto. When reinforcements for the Mediterranean were needed, these were provided either by transferring those units which would least be missed, taking up from civil life fresh vessels, or detailing ships recently launched.

<sup>1</sup> By the end of October 1915 in the Aegean alone there had arrived no fewer than 64 trawlers and 90 drifters from England. But more still were yet to come, to say nothing of torpedo craft and other vessels.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### AUXILIARY ADVENTURERS

**I**N order to cope with the Mediterranean's six submarines this autumn, there were ordered south several classes of auxiliary ships on whose efforts the principal operations would depend.

One of the first difficulties was how to find enough trawlers, but at Lowestoft there had accumulated a number of German ones such as the *Toni*, *Blumenthal*, *Stuttgart*, and others. These prizes had before the war been owned in such ports as Bremerhaven, Nordenham (Oldenburg), Geestemünde, Kiel, and so on. It was because of their small size that they could be spared from being employed with our North Sea patrols, and were now destined for Malta. Changing their names so as to end with "sin" (e.g. *Charlsin*, *Calumsin*, *Corinsin*, etc.), these ex-Germans were fitted generally with a 12-pounder and assembled at Falmouth before leaving in groups of six or seven or nine for Gibraltar *en route* for their destination. Trawlers used to take about a week during these rough November and December days for the Falmouth-Gibraltar voyage, and occasionally as many as sixteen of them reached the latter in one day, though the most impressive sight happened on Christmas Eve, when thirty-two left Gibraltar eastward bound.

Some of these foreign-built vessels were rather a nuisance with their frequent defects, and the better-constructed British trawlers gave far more satisfaction. But still the problem continued of the demand being superior to the supply. Malta needed forty-eight, Alexandria wanted the same number; and the Aegean, instead of being able to part with what she had, desired further additions. As a result of the Allies' Conference which met in Paris on December 2 and 3, 1915, when the Mediterranean Patrol strategy was discussed, there followed some important alterations and drastic improvements, which led to requirements on an unprecedented large scale. It was because the Malta Channel had now been given up by the French, besides practically all the deep-sea area in the Eastern Mediterranean (including

Egypt), that sixty-six armed trawlers had to be withdrawn a few days later from the British Isles ; and this requirement, coming before Schneider's warning cruise a fortnight later, showed how seriously six southern U-boats could influence the Home Patrol areas.

Frankly there was some disappointment that the French had not patrolled their section of Mediterranean waters more efficiently ; and thus begin those alterations of areas which showed at once the strength and weakness of decentralisation on a big scale. The same problem that obtained in the Adriatic—the parochial mind contesting with a broader conception—had to be faced all the way from Gibraltar to Palestine. Local interests, colonies, and special spheres of influence, were certainly entitled to consideration ; but much more pressing was the grand strategy of the Mediterranean shipping routes as a whole, and the vast expanse of sea where U-boats appeared to triumph as they willed.

At the beginning of war, the western end of the French area terminated seventeen miles east of Gibraltar, but the line was now brought farther till it extended north and south from Cartagena to Oran, that is to say 245 miles east of Gibraltar. This important funnel-like zone, through which every U-boat arriving by sea must pass, considerably increased the duties of Gibraltar's patrols which early this December comprised eleven torpedo-boats, four armed boarding steamers (for stopping and examining trade going through the Straits), nine trawlers and two sloops.

By the new arrangement, also, practically the whole eastern half of the Mediterranean passed under British patrolling. Whilst the French were nominally responsible for the western basin from Cartagena to Sardinia, as well as the coastal portions off Tunis ; whilst, also, the Italians were to look after the zone Otranto—Sicily—Sardinia—Corsica—Ventimiglia, plus the coastal area off Tripoli ; the rest of the Latin Lake was to be under our care with the exception of that district between Otranto Straits and Crete, as well as from Rhodes towards the south-east, thereby leaving Syria to France.

We were still acting under the assumption that patrols were better than convoys, and that a combined Naval-Military expedition could not be sent to wipe out the dangerous submarine nests at Cattaro and Pola. Thus did we commit ourselves to a strategy that could never be satisfying, and always left initiative to the U-boats. The position was comparable to that where the police

are well aware of some criminals about to attack pedestrians at certain undefined points of a long road. Should the police be scattered about that thoroughfare in twos and threes, keeping their beats? Or should they make a raid in force against the criminal quarter of the town, where they could be sure to arrest the whole gang?

A line of trawlers slowly patrolling up and down a trade route is a most deceiving idea. On the chart it seems excellent: in practice it affords but weak and casual protection. Why? Because units are too few, and the gaps in the line are too wide. A valuable transport may not be attacked within a mile or two of the patrol vessel, but farther on the lurking submarine has a free opportunity to launch her torpedo, wait till the victim's wireless has denuded the next few miles of watchful, succouring, trawlers, and then off goes the elusive hunter to meet another steamer approaching through a stretch of sea that is totally unoccupied.

Even to provide a skeleton protection, this patrol principle needed an ever-growing trawler fleet, whether at Malta or Alexandria; and it was only robbing our north European areas when the sixty-six additional armed trawlers were now sent to the Mediterranean from the Orkneys, Stornoway, Yarmouth, Lough Swilly, Kingstown, Holyhead, Milford, and Falmouth. Nor was that all. The Admiralty decided to send into the Middle Sea likewise a number of steam yachts, and the result of all this energy could be seen in Falmouth harbour on December 12. Within nine days of the Paris conference these sixty-six armed trawlers and three of the armed yachts (*North Star*, *Safa-el-Bahr*, *Aegusa*) were assembled, ready to sail via Gibraltar to Malta and Alexandria. It was an impressive sight, and such as no other European country could have provided.

At Malta Rear-Admiral Le Marchant was appointed from Kingstown to organise these auxiliary patrols, and have under him the last two of the above yachts, whilst *North Star* went on to Alexandria. In addition, the British Admiralty offered the French Admiralty seven armed steam yachts to patrol the Algerian coast, and the French accepted with alacrity. Now these included some of the best-built, and engined, pleasure vessels afloat, which up till the summer of 1914 were as well known on the Solent as in the Riviera harbours. A striking change was the transformation of white paint into grey; the ripping out of valuable but highly combustible panelling; the mounting of guns. One might have imagined that these well-

found units would turn out a great success, but experience proved that whether in the North Sea or off the Irish coast they were the most disappointing of all the types which served during the war. They had neither the speed of destroyers, nor the sea-keeping qualities of drifters and trawlers: in fact whilst here and there good work was accomplished by some yachts right till the end, yet on the whole they were somewhat of a misfit.

Therefore, having given the biggest and fastest of them many months of fair trial, only to find they never quite fitted in with any scheme, it seemed an excellent plan to lend them to our ally who was short of patrols. We had used these pleasure vessels as group leaders to look after trawlers; also to cruise about as private ships; and latterly as a fast squadron; yet their occasional narrow escapes of being sunk—in one case I recollect that a torpedo passed just under the yacht's counter—did not sufficiently justify their war existence. Perhaps the French would discover in them a utility which had not been appreciated by our own people?

It was on November 10, 1915, that *Sapphire*, *Atalanta*, *Iolanda*, *Jeannette*, *Marynthea*, and *Narcissus* all left Milford Haven with three months' stores, and *Eileen* (a millionaire's luxury yacht) joined them at Gibraltar by the 19th, after which they steamed to the African coast where the bases were to be Algiers and Oran. Barely a month, however, did these seven spend on their new duties than the French like ourselves discovered yachts to be unsuitable for patrolling, and sent them back to Gibraltar. The lesson is worth bearing in mind, since apart from their very limited usefulness such craft in hire alone cost the Admiralty £1 per ton, per month; on the top of which must be added heavy running expenses, and the cost of reconditioning at the close of hostilities.

All for the good was that Anglo-Franco-Italian December agreement in so far as it created greater efficiency, so that by the end of 1915 the new arrangement worked out as follows:

GIBRALTAR to have the armed yachts (now numbering eight), and six sloops instead of two, as well as the other vessels already mentioned, though more trawlers were expected later.

MALTA to have four destroyers, twelve sloops, besides the two yachts *Safa-el-Bahr*<sup>1</sup> and *Aegusa*, and the forty-eight armed trawlers.

<sup>1</sup> The steam yacht *Safa-el-Bahr* well illustrates the searching done in order to find every available kind of vessel for the patrol service. Her owner was Colonel F. L. Leland, an American citizen, and she had been lying at Venice for the last

EGYPT to have twelve sloops, the armed yacht *North Star*, and forty-eight armed trawlers.

The sloops (all named after flowers) were a product of the war, and this autumn saw them being delivered from the various builders. Practically they were small, single-screw cruisers about 255 feet long and of 1250 tons displacement, though originally designed for mine-sweeping. Constructed in a hurry to meet pressing needs, the first three dozen averaged six months from the time that the order was given till the date when they were ready for trials. And if the steam yachts were the least successful of H.M. ships, these sloops whether in the Mediterranean or off the British Isles were—size for size—the busiest and most profitable units of all. Their war careers were one long round of patrolling, chasing submarines, sweeping up mines, and (later) convoying, varied by disasters to themselves.

Now, in addition to the above, two other particular war types were sent to the Mediterranean and these must now be introduced. Firstly, then, we must deal with the motor-boats.

During the summer of 1915 four small motor yachts, each armed with a gun, were shipped aboard transports in England and reached Mudros. These four were named respectively *Mary Rose*, *Penelope*, *Dorothea*, and *Oomala*, the latter being attached to the Eastern Mediterranean Consular Service for intelligence duties. Another, called *Anzac*, came up from the Suez Canal, but a sixth (*California*) went out from England to the Aegean under her own power. This interesting and enterprising voyage was carried out from Southampton to Havre, thence up the Seine through Rouen and Paris; along the French inland waterways via Lyons, St. Louis, and Marseilles. The *California* then coasted along to Genoa, Leghorn, Naples, Messina, Malta, whence she reached Mudros, some delay having been incurred at Messina during November owing to a breakdown of engines and the commanding officer's health.

The *Dorothea*, *Mary Rose* and *Penelope* had been built by Messrs. Thornycroft for the Turkish Government, but before delivery could be made were taken over by the British Admiralty. They six years. The British Admiralty chartered her, and (as in the case of certain other yachts) a retired flag-officer with a temporary commission as Captain R.N.R. was appointed in command. This vessel of 669 tons was entrusted to Rear-Admiral H. Lyon (ret'd.), who came out to Venice by land in September 1915, and a fortnight later took her to sea. After reaching Portsmouth she was fitted out for service, and at the end of the year had steamed south again for Malta.

So, also, the 924 tons steam yacht *North Star* was owned by an American, Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt. She had been located in November 1914, lying at Greenock, before being taken over by the Admiralty.

measured 60 feet long and could do 11 knots. Unfortunately *Dorothea* caught fire and was destroyed in July 1915, but when the others settled down to their job with Port Iero (Mitylene Island) as their base, their R.N.V.R. officers were to perform excellent service. They were given the duty of patrolling the north and south entrances to the harbour of Aivali (which is on the mainland facing Mitylene) where they guarded the mine-nets we had laid to prevent the U-boats entering or leaving: for persistent rumours had suggested Aivali to be a submarine depot. This watchfulness by the motor-boats day and night till mid-September occasionally led to an interchange of shots, and next the flotilla were sent farther down the coast to the Gulf of Smyrna.

As we shall witness an exciting episode in a later chapter, it may be convenient here to give some idea of this bight, which is about fifteen miles wide at its entrance. The western shore is formed by the Kara Burnu peninsula running roughly north and south. Having got well down the Gulf, navigators find the space divided in two by Long Island (also known as Chustan), after which is sighted south-west from the island an indentation known as Gieulbagche Bay. To the south and east the channel leads between Vourlah and Pelican Point, becoming very narrow until finally opening out into the horseshoe natural harbour of Smyrna.

This Turkish province and densely populated city, with a big fruit and tobacco trade, obtained prominence quite early in the war, being always suspected of sheltering some mysterious surface ship, and in March 1915 its entrance had been bombarded by the Allies.<sup>1</sup> But no permanent result came of such visitations, nor could a lasting benefit have accrued unless we had occupied Smyrna, Long Island, Kara Burnu at one side of the Gulf, and Menemen at the other. By April some of those small submarines, which we saw in a previous chapter reaching the Adriatic by train from Germany, had begun to use Smyrna as an advance base when bound from Cattaro for the Dardanelles area. And it is now fairly established that UB-3 blew up on a Turkish mine-field when entering Smyrna some time during April 9.

Smyrna Gulf seemed just the place where the Motor Gunboat Flotilla could carry out some valuable labours, so towards the end of September *Mary Rose* and *Penelope* were sent from Port Iero to arrange for an operational base. The natural conditions of the indentation, with its protecting peninsulas and

<sup>1</sup> For details see my *Dardanelles Dilemma*, Chapter XV.



islands, made this smooth water area almost ideal for small craft. Finally, after careful search, the village of Nikola at the southern end of Long Island was chosen for the motor-boats' headquarters. The fine natural harbour afforded shelter from most winds, and the semi-ruined houses were turned into store-houses as well as barracks. In order to keep in touch with Port Iero, the boats were fitted with wireless gear, and then the flotilla began searching the island of Kilsali as well as the small islands forming the Vourlah roadstead.

By night and day patrols an alert watch was kept against both surface ships and submarines, several sailing vessels being captured or chased back to harbour. Under cover of night the entrance to Smyrna at Pelican Spit, and the Gulf of Gieulbagche, used to be visited ; and the minefields were carefully examined. For the latter could be descried below the water on all bright days. After the British occupation of Long Island, artillery and an aviation camp were established ; monitors were anchored between the north-east corner of that island and Menemen shore, so that frequent bombardments were made of Smyrna, outlying forts, and batteries. In fact the high road running westwards out of Smyrna to Urla became so dangerous during daylight that the Turks' communication was dangerously interrupted. Now before a safe passage could be made for these monitors down the island's eastern side, our motor-boats had been able by their shallow draught to get in among the mine "eggs," locate such as obstructed, then drop a charge of gun-cotton over the top and light the attached fuse. This allowed four minutes for the boat's escape, and then up went the explosion.

Apart from making reconnaissances, piloting warships through the mine-field passages, escorting the monitors when bombarding, standing by towards Smyrna so as to aid any of our aeroplanes in case they crashed : this motor-boat flotilla was very useful for bringing off from the mainland many of the three thousand refugees belonging to all nationalities. These were transported from the mainland to Nikola village, examined, and afterwards sent by drifter to the Vice-Consul at Mitylene, where not a few of them turned out to be Turkish spies. So the tiny men-of-war with their yachtsmen officers, and a stiffening of marines among the crews, went on till the tragedy of May 1916, which shall be related in due course. It will suffice for the present if we remark that the evacuation of Long Island, and the removal of the boats to work in the Straits of Chios, was followed in September by

orders for this improvised flotilla to return to England; for half a dozen of the newly built M.L.'s were about to arrive.

Now it was on April 9, 1915, that the contract had been signed for construction of the first fifty M.L.'s in North America, which were to be 75 feet long, with two 220 horse-power U.S.A. motors; the price complete being £8000 each boat. The original order was three months later increased to 550, and the length to be 80 feet. The pattern boat had been made at Bayonne, New Jersey, where all the fabrication work was done, but in Canada, at Quebec and Montreal, assembling of the parts went on; after which the finished M.L.'s were shipped four at a time on board steamers bound to Portsmouth. Altogether the 550 were built in 488 working days. The first of them (M.L. 4) which ever made a cruise from Portsmouth to London, came up the river on October 22, 1915, when she went alongside H.M.S. *President* off the Thames Embankment to be inspected by certain Lords of the Admiralty.

Before the middle of November no fewer than thirty-four M.L.'s had reached Portsmouth from Montreal, and every few days another four would be lifted from deck into the harbour till one basin presented the extraordinary sight of being packed with these grey craft as tightly as matches in a box. So it was that, after the motor yachts had proved themselves worth while in one part of the Eastern Mediterranean, twelve of the earliest M.L.'s to be commissioned were sent for service in Egyptian waters. Numbers 31-36 left Portsmouth in the S.S. *Diyatalawia* on January 13, 1916, bound for Port Said, whilst the S.S. *Queensland* sailed with M.L.'s 35 and 37. The steam-yacht *Catania* (commanded by the Duke of Sutherland, R.N.R.) was fitted at Portsmouth with a workshop, sent out also to Egypt to act as a repair ship for the M.L.'s, and also to do some of the patrolling. For the calm waters of the Suez Canal these fast M.L.'s were excellently suited, and badly needed. The previous summer a party of Turks had moved out through the Little Bitter Lake, boarded a pile-driver, captured the crew, fired rifles on a passing steamer, and retreated after leaving dynamite aboard the pile-driver. There was always a possibility of some raid being attempted, or of mines being laid: indeed on one occasion after a Turkish land patrol had been driven off near Ballah, a buried mine was subsequently discovered, whilst on the last day of June (1915) the British S.S. *Teiresias* during her passage through the Canal actually struck a mine in the Little Bitter Lake, though they towed her into safety.

Thus the arrival of M.L.'s to patrol the Bitter Lakes came none too soon. No further introduction to this American-built series is necessary, beyond the fewest words. Later on the M.L.'s were busy all over the Mediterranean—in the Gibraltar Straits, Otranto Straits, and some of the Aegean Straits. To-day, nearly a generation afterwards, one still finds their hulls commissioned as yachts in various Mediterranean harbours, and still able to cruise along the coast. Few seafarers, who examined these roughly made craft two decades ago, ever imagined it possible that any such boat would keep afloat after three years. Somehow luck accompanied the idea from the first to the last.

Only a month after the contract had been signed occurred the *Lusitania* sensation, which gave a considerable impetus to all thoughts of building mosquito craft. That was how fifty M.L.'s became magnified eleven times, and the idea increased to a £4,400,000 undertaking. It was indeed a romance of industry, and a fine result of organisation with scientific standardisation; the accurate duplication of parts, celerity of assembling, and employment of 130 steamers to carry them safely across the Atlantic. Never one of the latter foundered, although in the Mediterranean the torpedoing of a transport with M.L.'s on her decks was not altogether unknown.

But apart from all the above destroyers, sloops, trawlers, yachts, and motor craft, gathered at fabulous expense to counteract the six U-boats, there were those un-smart Cinderellas of the sea known as Q-ships. From the British Isles during the autumn of 1915 arrived a typical "three-island" tramp steamer named *Wyandra*, owned by the Ellerman Line but chartered by the Admiralty. If she was not much to look at, she had already made history: for this was none other than the famous *Baralong* (4192 tons), which on August 19 had sunk U-27 and on September 24 had destroyed U-41. After these incidents, which happened off the western approaches to the English Channel, the decision was made (in view of German demands for vengeance) that she had best change her name and cruising area. It was hoped, all the same, that her good fortune would not alter.

Now at this period other Q-ships were already getting into their stride, and since submarines up and down the Mediterranean routes were making a "dead set" at cargo steamers the Middle Sea suggested fair opportunities. During the autumn the 3848 tons S.S. *Werribee* (alias *Thornhill*, *Wellholme*, and *Wonganella*), the 3683 tons *Saros* (alias *Bradford City*), the 4318 tons *Penhallow*

(alias *Century*), and another steamer named *Margit*, were all set aside as traps along the Mediterranean lanes. They resembled externally anything rather than a man-of-war, their size being roughly that of an average cargo carrier ; but the armament of two concealed 4-inch and a smaller gun made them a fair match for the enemy, yet chance and good tactics would in the last resort decide the issue.

## CHAPTER XIX

### BLOCKADE

**F**ROM the Firth of Forth to the Aegean was a far cry, and especially when the threat of submarines made the south-about routes via Dover Straits out of the question; but during the weeks of late autumn it was not improbable that bad weather might be the greater enemy.

Among those who were lying in the Forth on Friday, November 5, 1915, were H.M.S. *Hibernia* (flagship of Rear-Admiral Sydney Fremantle<sup>1</sup>), H.M.S. *Zealandia*, and H.M.S. *Albemarle*. That evening the Admiral suddenly received orders to take his three ships to sea *en route* for the Aegean: and at 6 a.m. on Saturday they got under way, in darkness so dense that whilst the flagship could see *Zealandia*, her next astern, the *Albemarle*, was quite invisible to the Admiral. Soon, however, the sun rose and "we boomed up north as hard as we could," but about 9 p.m. the squadron encountered a strong wind blowing against the hot spring-tide that was running in the notorious Pentland Firth. A heavy sea got up.

Sir Sydney Fremantle, who has been kind enough to give me his narrative of that memorable night (6th-7th), says that at 2 a.m. "I had a good look at the weather and decided that the sea was not too bad to go on at a good speed, and went into my deck cabin to have an hour or two in my arm-chair. I had hardly time to get there when we took in a tremendous sea, followed by two or three more. I couldn't ease down at once on account of the ships astern of me,<sup>2</sup> but did so as soon as possible, and proceeded to see how they were faring. It was pitch dark, and I couldn't see them—could only signal. *Zealandia* was more or less all right when she had got over the surprise of rushing suddenly and unexpectedly into a terrific sea: but *Albemarle* I could see or hear nothing of. Eventually she signalled by wireless that she wanted immediate assistance and made S.O.S. Then that her forebridge had gone and the ship full of water. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Now Admiral Sir Sydney Fremantle, G.C.B., M.V.O.

<sup>2</sup> The squadron was still steaming in single-line-ahead.

"I told *Zealandia* to go on, and turned round myself to look after her—none too easy a job. We found her eventually, apparently unmanageable. It was out of the question to attempt to tow her, or to send boats, on account of the sea, so I decided to stand by her till daylight and hope for the best." Luckily when the dawn came, *Albemarle* was still afloat, but hundreds of tons of water had poured down below, the two heavy seas had washed away her forebridge with everyone on it, and even displaced the conning-tower's roof. They both managed to get into Scapa and anchor, whither also came *Zealandia*, who had been damaged and compelled to turn back.

"In all our experience of the Pentland Firth," remarked<sup>1</sup> the late Lord Jellicoe of this incident, "we had never witnessed such havoc." "I went on board at 10 a.m. directly we had anchored," adds Admiral Freemantle, who says the extraordinary scene resembled the effects of an earthquake. "A Commander and one man were washed overboard and not seen again," whilst the "Captain, navigator, and fourteen other officers and men were badly injured." The engines kept on turning, but everyone had been thoroughly knocked by the amazing surprise, the sudden disappearance of Captain and Navigating Officer, the ensuing period when the ship remained out of control, and the inability amid the darkness to find out what had happened.

Now it is true that *Albemarle* was of 14,000 tons displacement as against the other two battleships' 16,350, but the first-mentioned had the reputation of being the more sea-kindly of the three. Altogether, what with the gale, the impenetrable darkness, the wind and tide "setting us both on to a rocky coast about 8 miles off," the knowledge that U-boats were likely to be off North Scotland, the Admiral had a full night of responsibilities and excitements, together with physical discomfort. For, just as he was mounting the ladder to the forebridge, arrived the second sea which nearly (but not quite) unshipped the ladder, filled his sea-boots, got through oilskins; and in this wet condition anxieties had to be borne till after 9 a.m.

Leaving *Albemarle* behind, the other two battleships departed from Scapa again that Saturday afternoon, and after passing down the Irish Channel, called at Milford Haven where the Admiral was joined by his third ship, the *Russell*, which in less than six months later had her own dramatic destiny. As if the continuous series of gales had not tried the squadron sufficiently,

<sup>1</sup> *The Grand Fleet, 1914-1916*, p. 256.

another one—"really about as bad as I have known"—hit them in the Bay of Biscay, so that speed had to be reduced to 8 knots : in fact aboard *Hibernia* they had to batten down the upper deck, with just one little round hole through which everybody had to get up and down. On Sunday night Gibraltar Straits were rushed at full speed, since it was a likely spot for submarines.

It is interesting to record the anxious attitude which any flag-officer during those days of U-boat activities suffered. Between November 6, when Rosyth was left astern in the fog, and November 18, when these three battleships safely reached Malta, only on two nights had their Admiral been able to have a real sleep between the sheets, and on one of the two occasions was whilst waiting at Milford Haven. Nor did Malta afford much opportunity for resting either officers or men : after thirty-six hours the squadron steamed off to the Aegean, there to join up with the French.

Now this was a critical period in the Mediterranean operations. The Dardanelles campaign was fast approaching its conclusion, and after another month would come the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac. Meanwhile, however, the Bulgarians had made their junction with the Austro-Germans north of Monastir, the Central Powers planned to continue their offensive even to Salonika and throw into the sea the Allied troops, then numbering 20,000 British with 46,000 French. The situation looked grave, but especially because a stab in the back might come any day from the Greeks. With the purpose of intimidating the latter and obtaining therefrom full security, a Special Squadron was constituted at Malta on November 20, in answer to the request of France's Minister at Athens. This *escadre spéciale* under Vice-Admiral Le Bris comprised the three French battleships *Vérité*, *Justice*, and *Démocratie*, together with Rear-Admiral Fremantle's *Hibernia*, *Zealandia*, and *Russell*, the Italian cruiser *Francesco Ferruccio*, and the Russian cruiser *Askold*, to say nothing of about thirty trawlers and other small craft. They reached Milo by November 25.

Thus began the first of those interventions by the Allies upon Greece who could understand argument only when backed up by a display of force, and we shall during the following chapters see this demonstration expressed in naval terms on several remarkable occasions. The anchorage for this mixed squadron was selected at Milo because the island, only 90 miles away from Athens, not merely provided an excellent harbour, but possessed

a good strategical position. If the Greeks were to show the slightest aggression against our Salonika Army, the powerful Allied squadron could take immediate action, steam north, bombard the Gulf of Athens forts and dockyard, shell the Piræus, sink their four battleships, destroyers, and other units.

With no little tact the British and French admirals concerted the plan of operations, but it seemed not unlikely that this mixed force might have to wait patiently for three or four months ere the Greeks would learn a preference for fearing the Allies rather than the Austro-German-Bulgarians. Milo harbour was beautiful, the weather perfect, though ashore the island looked treeless and dry as a bone, affording few supplies beyond fish, melons, eggs (at fourpence each), and dried figs. Even in late November the clear skies and blue sea, the temperature like that of an English May, the surrounding protection of high hills, and the anti-submarine defences on the water, combined to make life more than tolerable and in notable contrast with the fogs and gales of the North Sea.

Thus passed pleasantly several weeks, during which the various British ships were being drilled for the special duties they might be called upon to perform at short notice any day ; but on December 9, in response to what was virtually an ultimatum, the Greeks bowed to this naval threat, their Government agreed to withdraw from Salonika all their troops except one division. Although they would protest, yet under no circumstances would they harm the Allied Army.

By the middle of December the crisis had passed, the Milo demonstration had achieved its purpose, and Admiral Fremantle was ordered to bring the whole of his squadron up the Aegean, where he was to take part in the historic withdrawal from Gallipoli. For Mudros was the headquarters of the British Vice-Admiral commanding the East Mediterranean, who flew his flag in the battleship *Lord Nelson*, whilst Kephalo Bay at the south-east end of Imbros Island afforded our advance base. It was at the latter that the *Hibernia* with her two sisters now took up her position, and a most uncomfortable anchorage it proved to be.

The great withdrawal from Gallipoli peninsula it is not necessary here to discuss in detail.<sup>1</sup> Let it suffice if we remind the reader that by 5.40 a.m. of December 21 (or a week after *Hibernia* had left Milo) the last soldier had quitted Suvla and Anzac ; and that by 4.55 a.m. of January 9 Helles likewise had been evacuated.

<sup>1</sup> I have dealt with this subject in my *Dardanelles Dilemma*.



Many were the interesting yarns which the troops brought off with them at this memorable occasion, and the anecdotes passed from one of the ships to the other. It was all in the well-known tradition where "The Admiral told a story; the Ward Room approved it; the Gun Room adorned it; the Petty Officers' Mess expanded it; and the Lower Deck elaborated it." It may or may not be true that a major in the Gallipoli trenches was arguing as to which smelt the worse—a goat or a Turk. Someone brought along a goat and the major fainted: then a Turk was produced and the goat fainted.

But there seems no sort of doubt that the Australians were sadly displeased at having to give up their land efforts and go afloat after such glorious contending. They, too, had tales to tell the sailors—tales that belonged to truth. Before departing, the Anzacs left all sorts of impudent traps for unwary Turks. Apart from 7 tons of dynamite in the trenches, the former carefully deposited spades, which on being lifted would release a bomb; tempting tins of preserved fruit which, as soon as the tin-opener made contact, fired a mine; tents, where the moment its flap was pulled aside a rifle fired at the intruder.

Grievous as it was to give back all that had been gained at Gallipoli after losing 28,200 killed, 78,095 wounded, and 11,254 missing—or a total of 117,549—this abandonment did have a simplifying effect on the Mediterranean situation. At a time when the submarine menace was firmly increasing, it was no little relief that the busy traffic of steamers to and from the Dardanelles could now be partially diverted.

But next began a gigantic sorting out of men and ships, the application of a fresh strategy, the revision of aims and possibilities. As to the first, it meant rearranging not merely the battleships, cruisers, monitors, destroyers, ketches (a generic term to include trawlers and drifters); but also transports, army supply ships, frozen meat ships, hospital-ships, colliers, and aeroplanes as well. The trawlers and drifters had over and over again proved themselves indispensable. Had not the latter even this January 1916 given protection against submarines whilst *Hibernia*, *Russell*, and monitors bombarded the Asiatic coast?

We have seen the formidability of the task in transferring 130,000 Serbs; but about that same number of British troops were now waiting at Mudros till the Government at home made up its mind whither to remove them. In control of that big base had been Vice-Admiral Rosslyn E. Wemyss, but he was soon to

leave and succeed Vice-Admiral Sir R. H. Peirse, whose command included the Suez Canal and Egypt. By the importance of this Canal route, the repeated threats against it, the possibility of further developments both to the west and east, there were to be attracted battalions of lean, well-trying veterans from the Dardanelles till Egypt became a vast garrison of more than 200,000 troops. But that, in turn, stressed still more the need for guaranteeing security for the army supply ships crossing the Mediterranean via the dangerous submarine zones.

Simultaneously, the Salonika campaign was waxing more insistent on men and supplies, so that the Aegean shipping routes were not less busy than during the Gallipoli operations, which is to say that the U-boats were dead sure to find targets all the way up from Crete to the shores of northern Greece. But on the top of all these duties, the East Mediterranean Squadron could not be disbanded, or forsake its Mudros and Kephalo bases. Within the Dardanelles, and based on Constantinople, were the causes of all this Turkish trouble—the German battle-cruiser *Goeben* and the cruiser *Breslau*. It might be weeks, or it might be months, ere these two made a sortie: they might, likewise (as hinted on an earlier page), join hands with the Austrian Fleet: this much, however, was certain—that a relentless watch must be kept day and night, fine weather or bad, outside the Gallipoli Straits. In other words, we were back where we had been in September 1914; and the Dardanelles warfare on land as well as sea, in spite of all the losses to men and ships, had been a mere ineffective episode.

In brief, the Navy was now committed to the following tasks:

1. Blockade of the Dardanelles; maintaining a constant watch against a sortie; interfering with the Turks by means of bombardments from ships, and the dropping of bombs from aircraft.
2. Supporting the Salonika Army by the Anglo-French Fleet; blockading the Bulgarian coast; ensuring safe passage up the Aegean for transports and supply ships, in spite of submarines and mines.
3. Having in readiness a powerful naval force for demonstrating against the Greeks on any threatening political crisis; protecting such Aegean islands as were in our occupation.
4. Protecting the Suez Canal by battleships and other units.
5. Patrolling the Mediterranean shipping lanes.
6. Continuing the Adriatic blockade, and making the Otranto Straits less easy for U-boats.

It will be obvious that any one of these categories presented quite enough difficulties and possibilities: taken, however, in combination, they composed a special and particular problem. In the Aegean, for example, there developed almost inevitably the tendency to divide the sea into so many separate sea-kingdoms: for the Dardanelles blockade was a purpose utterly different from that off Salonika, just as the anti-submarine patrol proposition contrasted with the Suez Canal task. All this decentralisation, however requisite events made it to be, had the effect of dispersing and weakening naval strength, of introducing conflicting ideas, so that there were times when procedure became the exact opposite of "all hands pulling on one rope."

In January some of Admiral de Robeck's battleships were detached for the defence of Egypt, whilst Admiral Fremantle settled down to blockade the Dardanelles and continually harassing the Turks still remaining on the peninsula. After all the months, during which both services had constituted a perpetual threat to Constantinople, it was expedient for the Navy to keep up bombardments, let the enemy remain in a state of uncertain guessing, not daring to withdraw thousands of his troops to other positions. Admiral Fremantle had now under him three battleships, three cruisers, four monitors, ten destroyers, and numerous trawlers for this dual duty of blockading and keeping the enemy in suspense. Not Mudros, but Kephalo (some 60 miles nearer the Dardanelles mouth) was chosen for the squadron, and here we have another of those sharp contrasts between theory and practice. On the chart this advanced position, with the projecting point of land which ends at Cape Kephalo, seemed excellent; but the matter of weather had to be reckoned with. If you were on the northern side and the wind southerly all was well. This, however, could not be guaranteed long, for such are the local conditions out there that it might be a beautiful, fine, calm day with a high and steady barometer. An hour later a northerly gale might have sprung up, blowing straight into Kephalo with a lee shore waiting to wreck any units whose anchors should drag. Thus not infrequently battleships, monitors, destroyers, colliers, and the rest would be seen all of a sudden getting up anchor and scuttling round to the southern side of Kephalo's promontory, leaving perhaps H.M.S. *Hibernia* to ride it out alone with two anchors down. Next day, as likely as not, back from the south would fly the wind and the reverse process of shifting would become inconveniently necessary.

More wonderful this January, of course, was Mudros. If the island bore scarcely a tree, and contained only a few villages with rocky hills and considerable areas of cultivated ground along the low level, its harbour presented an amazing spectacle. Here were assembled ships by the hundred, and of all kinds: French and British, men-of-war, transports, colliers, naval and military supply ships, hospital-ships, salvage ships, tugs, motor-lighters, trawlers, submarines—whilst around this vast harbour were camps and huts for the sick, for refugees from Asia Minor, for Egyptian workmen, for Turkish prisoners; besides depots for supplies, horses, mules, and so on.

The four monitors (just mentioned) were kept south of the Dardanelles entrance at Rabbit Island, ready to open fire any moment on a particular Turkish battery 10 miles away. Then the enemy established a gun some 5 miles off, and began firing at the monitors every afternoon. After a while the Turks got better and better in accuracy, so that one day the captain of the senior monitor had a shell right through his cabin, finishing up in the drawer where he kept his white clothes. Quite a mess was made of them, and the captain's annoyance became more than roused, yet, curiously, the missile did no great harm otherwise.

At Tenedos Island (where also the French had a small garrison as well as hospital and an aviation camp) British drifters possessed an establishment for their nets. It was these French airmen who located the gun that had worried the monitors. But there would often be disappointments, as for example when a British battleship was to make a shoot, with an aeroplane spotting for her, against some Turkish camps in a valley. Admiral Fremantle's idea was that this should take place at 5 p.m., just as all the enemy's working parties would be returning. It was a most propitious day, and everything going well, but barely had the first shots been fired than a Taube aeroplane chased our aeroplane away from the sky, leaving the result doubtful.

There were also occasions when the enemy's 'planes came over to bomb Tenedos, but out here was that picturesque and extremely gallant officer Commander Samson, one of the pioneers of flying and now in charge of a Wing. He used to wait till the enemy made a night attack on Tenedos. Off then Samson would fly towards Chanak aerodrome at the Dardanelles Narrows, and there find the ground illuminated in readiness for the returning bomber. Samson would then pretend to be the latter, swoop close down, and deluge the place with his bombs.

But one of the most satisfying nocturnal adventures had been planned by the Admiral to take place on January 11, that is a couple of nights after the troops finally evacuated Gallipoli. As the reader well knows, we had sunk a number of steamers at Helles to provide breakwaters. There now seemed a likelihood that some of these and the historic *River Clyde*, which had intentionally put herself ashore at V-beach, might be salved and taken by the enemy up to Constantinople. In order to prevent such efforts, an expedition left Imbros this night at 10.30 p.m. Transferring his flag temporarily to the monitor *Grafton* (aboard which the Commander had been killed a few days previously, whilst in the conning-tower, by an enemy's 6-inch shell bursting inside), Admiral Fremantle set forth, accompanied by two destroyers as well as four picket-boats from *Hibernia* and *Russell*. It was the kind of adventure which would delight the heart of any naval officer of any age, and its bare narration has in it all the elements of a first-class story for healthy-minded boys.

After steaming 14 miles, the seven units rendezvoused at a spot 3 miles from their objective. The night was pitch dark, success depended on surprise and the exact carrying out of precise orders, the job consisting of destroying the sunken ships by torpedoes dropped from the picket-boats. If anyone bungled, or chanced an accident, it would not only spoil the undertaking but endanger his mates. Thus they all crept on very slowly for another mile, when *Grafton* made the signal for attack. The destroyers steamed till 1 mile from the shore and waited, whilst the four picket-boats rushed straight on to their targets.

On such a black night, and across the current which runs past the peninsula, with the cliffs and wrecks' hulls melted into a vague background of darkness, it was no easy task to do the right thing quickly but effectively. Doubtless the enemy would be still very much on the alert so recently after the final withdrawal, and would set up a withering fire at the first alarm. If this should happen, the Admiral had arranged for *Grafton* and destroyers immediately to put on their searchlights and shell the place, so as to draw fire on to themselves away from the picket-boats. A lively time was anticipated, for doubtless the Turks would have portable searchlights and field batteries ready.

Neatly and promptly the four boats got right up to the objectives, loosed off their torpedoes, turned round and rejoined the destroyers, followed by four shells and only a slight but ineffective rifle fire. Of the six silver missiles released, five gained hits, and

the expected Turkish searchlights never showed. The episode ended almost before the enemy knew of its beginning, and by 5 a.m. ships and boats had arrived back in harbour after a completely successful occasion. "It was really quite like an 'Old Navy' cutting-out expedition," Admiral Fremantle described the adventure, "as the picket-boats had to go very close up to make sure of their targets."

Thus the blockade became a necessary routine, which might suddenly be enlivened at any moment. Daily some Turkish fort, or camp, or village would be bombarded; yet when at length the enemy finished foraging about amongst the stores our Army had left behind on the peninsula, he seemed to wish only to be alone. In the air a different story unfolded itself. Activity was inclined to develop rather than vanish, and these island bases for British forces could no longer count on immunity. During the second week of January we lost four aeroplanes, whilst in three of these both pilot and observer were fatal casualties. Without aircraft to spot for them, bombarding ships were firing blindly; and owing to the hard January winds, and much cloudy weather, definite results were not easy.

During that month we took over Tenedos from the French, whilst at Imbros besides the above-mentioned ships and one submarine, there were two battalions of the Royal Naval Division as garrison. The Air Wing there stationed was the means by which fresh news constantly reached the Admiral: for instance, one day an airman reported that the French huts which had been left standing had been repaired and installed within the old Sedd-el-Bahr fort at the Dardanelles entrance. Also it was stated that five hundred Germans had arrived to inhabit the aforesaid dwellings. Therefore four British destroyers were sent across to start shelling that spot at 5.30 a.m. before the enemy had risen from sleep.

Our own people in the air, under the water, and on the surface were having more excitements than we have space to record. Aerial competition became ever keener, and fights more frequent: then suddenly arrived a wonderful German pilot with a Fokker monoplane to interfere with our reconnaissances. He attacked, among other aircraft, one of ours wherein both pilot and observer were badly wounded, the former's life being saved by the chance that he happened to have on him a sovereign-purse.<sup>1</sup> After

<sup>1</sup> A bullet was actually stopped by the purse and took a chip out of five sovereigns.

momentarily losing control of his machine, he held on for 20 miles, made a perfect landing, and then fainted right off. His observer had been hit in the thigh and fore-arm, but went on firing his gun, and after landing was able to write out an excellent reconnaissance report before having his wounds attended. Ten times had that aeroplane been struck, and it is remarkable that men or machine survived.

Then the British submarine on this station whilst on watch within gun-range of Cape Helles had the misfortune to be caught in some underwater obstruction,<sup>1</sup> with her head down and her tail well above the sea. In this condition, presenting a most tempting target, she hung for seventeen minutes and would have been hit but for the lucky fact that the cruiser *Theseus* was at the time bombarding Helles and distracted the Turks' attention.

Now these incidents are recalled for two reasons; firstly, because the general public imagines that after the final evacuation from Gallipoli nothing more ever happened in that area; and, secondly, because we get some idea of how a close blockade under modern conditions is put into practice. For most of the next three months, however, active operations were frequently impossible: the northerly gales set in with aggravating persistence, mist and rain hampered visibility, and in general the chiefest detailed work comprised shifting berth from one side of Cape Kephalo to the other, keeping harbour defences intact, and doing salvage work.

By the second week in February Mudros harbour was being cleared rapidly of its shipping, and the soldiers were fast disappearing across the sea to Egypt. But every week emphasised that the principal preoccupation of the squadron must be how to deal with the *Goeben*. It was unthinkable that she would remain always inside the Straits, and the difficulty would be how to stop her escaping at her selected opportunity. Now the history of naval blockades, whether during the age of sail or steam, shows that sooner or later the combination of courageous enterprise with favourable circumstances will enable one or more ships to elude the confinement. Just, for instance, as the French often escaped our pressure during the eighteenth century, so during the 1914-1918 hostilities German surface ships slipped through the big blockade off north Scotland, as they evaded that other blockade off East Africa.

<sup>1</sup> Possibly the wrecked French S.S. *Carthage*, torpedoed by U-21 on July 4, 1915.

In these days where we place so much reliance on machinery, we can see ahead by the merest calculation that the race will be to the swiftest. Each of the three battleships *Hibernia*, *Zealandia*, and *Russell* was armed with four 12-inch guns, as against the *Goeben's* ten 11-inch. Whilst the latter could do her 25 knots, and even 29 knots for a short spell if really necessary, not one of the three British battleships could have exceeded 19 or 20 knots. It is true that both *Hibernia* and *Zealandia* carried also four 9.2-inch guns, but on January 22 of this year 1916 the former was taken away from blockading and Admiral Fremantle shifted his flag to the *Russell*. Previously he had kept two of the three battleships at Kephalo, and the third sometimes at Mudros.<sup>1</sup> Of the two there was always one vessel, with everybody on board, and ready to leave at half an hour's notice, whilst the second was at two hours' notice.

The Dardanelles entrance being but 10 miles from Kephalo, and now only two battleships available, it began to look as if the blockade would have to be run only by submarines plus destroyers; for the undesirability of being concerned with too many war theatres manifested itself beyond all doubt. At present half a dozen destroyers and twenty trawlers always steamed their patrol off the Straits' mouth, but, at dawn (which most probably would be the time for any sortie) both *Russell* and *Zealandia* could always steam forth if given fifteen minutes' warning. On the other hand this blockade was now being threatened by more regular visitations from submarines; and the cruiser *Theseus*, which happened to be out on patrol one February day, suffered an attack that fortunately proved ineffective.

Nothing would have suited the Germans' routine better than for her submarines from Cattaro to roam up the Aegean along the transport route, sink one or two steamers in the Salonika region, then move across towards Lemnos and Imbros, torpedo one of the battleships and thus at one blow make *Goeben's* chances of escape easier. Obviously the U-boats were not granted their full opportunities, and battleships were kept in harbour till the last minute. There were always two or three hours when these capital ships could ease up their tension: this would be immediately after our aeroplanes on a clear day had reconnoitred up the Straits and come back at 80 miles an hour. On moonless

<sup>1</sup> For such purposes as boiler-cleaning periodically. Presently the battleship *Albion* was sent to join his flag, but she was no faster, and carried four 12-inch guns.



nights between midnight and 5 a.m. the possibility of *Goeben's* trying to rush out could never be dismissed.

What, then, were our prospects ?

The answer is that with their inferior speed by about 7 knots, starting out from a base 10 miles away from the battle-cruiser's southerly course, it was a mechanical impossibility for our battleships to overtake or catch up with the Germans. But they could always prevent her from getting back after a raid, so that unless *Goeben* could rely on joining up with the Austrian fleet or fighting her way through the Otranto Straits, she would speedily find herself with empty bunkers and no harbour to enter. Moreover, with all the Allied naval strength in the Adriatic duly warned by Admiral Fremantle's wireless, *Goeben's* dash northwards between Corfu and the Italian coast would be the riskiest gamble. Apart from such considerations, there was always a fair chance that the Admiral's submarine, or his destroyers might torpedo her before she got clear of the Dardanelles entrance.

These factors are here stressed because in a later chapter we shall the better appreciate the situation when both *Goeben* and *Breslau* did make their dramatic appearance. But doubtless it will have occurred to the reader that the blockade could be materially strengthened if mines were judiciously laid across the Gallipoli exit : that meant no light undertaking at a time when really dependable mines were few even for the Dover Straits. Still, a beginning was made and out of this moderate endeavour there gradually evolved a vast mine-laying scheme which invisibly closed the Dardanelles door for the most part. In other words, here was laid a most dangerous ambush so that until its exact position and extent were revealed the two German warships dared not emerge.

This initial mine-laying took place on the night of March 23, the darkest period of moonless hours being specially chosen. It was expected that the enemy might put up some opposition, wherefore the operation was "covered," Admiral Fremantle himself being out in a destroyer : but no interference happened, and the Germans (who, rather than the Turks, now occupied the land territory) remained in ignorance. That was exactly as should be, for without a perfect knowledge of the moored mines *Goeben* and *Breslau* were unable to come west and south, however free was their cruising to the north and east through the Black Sea.

If only they could secure a chart with the danger fields indicated,

something might follow. Perfectly true ! But how the cartographical knowledge finally reached them must be told many pages hence. The Aegean was alive with spies, some working for the Allies and some for the enemy. Much of our up-to-date knowledge as to the latter's movements was obtained for us by the simplest means, as, for instance, landing some dark night near some village a couple of Greek shepherds who had lived on the Gallipoli peninsula. After so many days elapsed, they were embarked from the same spot but did not receive their pay till coming on board and delivering the information.

## CHAPTER XX

### MEDITERRANEAN Q-SHIPS

THE spring of 1916 plainly enough indicated that Germany's six submarine experts—Forstmann, Gansser, Rücker, Hersing, de la Perière, and Valentiner—were going to make the year lively in all parts of the Mediterranean, and special attention was to be paid along the Malta-Port Said route. The first mentioned was certainly one of those who worked up the Aegean, but also off the Algerian coast ; the second operated between Port Said and Malta ; the third frequented the Aegean also ; whilst the fourth (after U-21's long refit) brought his boat to cruise so far east of Malta as the French zone off the Syrian coast ; whilst de la Perière went all over the Middle Sea, and Valentiner principally devoted himself to its eastern half.

Even on New Year's day did this officer in U-38 torpedo the British S.S. *Glengyle* (9395 tons), the position being about one-quarter of the distance (actually 240 miles east by south) from Malta on the route to Port Said. Proceeding west, being now forty miles nearer Malta, he sank by bombs the British S.S. *Coquet* (4396 tons) on January 4, seventeen lives being lost and ten became prisoners of the Arabs. Now it will be recollected that Gallipoli completed its evacuation early on January 9, and doubtless the U-boats on patrol were made privy of this by wireless some time during the day. Evidently such news led to the need for fresh orders and the U-boats' recall. For Valentiner returned to Cattaro on the 10th, and no more sinkings or molestings were made in the three sections—Aegean, Adriatic, or Mediterranean—till the 17th, when the attacks recommenced.

This week's halt was doubly significant, for undoubtedly a German submarine awaited her opportunity that busy night (January 8-9) at the Dardanelles. As troop-carriers from the *River Clyde* and various beaches three old battleships—H.M.S. *Prince George*, *Mars*, and *Magnificent*—were being employed to bring their valuable freights away to Mudros. *Prince George* had a most remarkable escape, since she was struck by a torpedo,

though luckily it failed to explode, wherefore her crew and 1500 soldiers did not go down to watery graves.

But when the submarines resumed their violent activity, we had quite a surprise awaiting them. In a previous chapter mention was made of those disguised decoys known as Q-ships, and now at last came their first chance. Imagine a typical single-funnel steamer with the most ordinary features, and generally resembling any of the many cargo vessels to be seen each week bound to or from Malta eastward. This was the *Margit*, which had been taken up by the Admiralty, armed with concealed guns, and commissioned from December 6 of the preceding year. Her captain was Lieutenant-Commander G. L. Hodson, R.N., and on this January 17 the ship had reached a position about 170 miles east of Malta to which base she now steered. At 9.30 a.m. she intercepted an "S O S" on her wireless, the signals evidently coming from a vessel not far distant: in fact a little later shots were seen falling close by a steamer some five miles to the southward.

In accordance with legitimate ruse, *Margit* now hoisted as false colours the Dutch ensign, and altered course towards the distressed ship, which turned out to be the *Baron Napier* (4943 tons). The latter made such signals as "Am being shelled," "Submarine gaining on me"; and indeed the U-boat was sighted on the surface four miles to the westward, nor did she break off her onslaught till *Margit* got within two miles of her. Then at 10.20 the enemy transferred her attentions from *Baron Napier* to *Margit*, who gradually edged away from both in order to let the real cargo-carrier escape and to give the Q-ship room for the duel.

By 10.44 the German shells were falling very close to *Margit*, both ahead and astern, yet not one had hit. Hodson sent his people to "panic stations," and pretended to give in, the signal "I am stopped" being hoisted a few minutes later with every appearance of abandoning ship manifested. The ship's lifeboat, in charge of Sub-Lieutenant McClure, R.N.R., shoved off from the decoy with a party representing all hands, though the guns' crews (under Lieutenant Tweedie, R.N.R., and Sub-Lieutenant Kennaird, R.N.R.), plus five riflemen on the foredeck (under Sergeant Kelly of the Marines) remained hidden till the fateful moment. Right aft with other rifles were Midshipman Hovenden, R.N., and Chief Petty Officer Hines.

Lying prone and unseen on the bridge, the captain peered

through holes in his screen and watched with suppressed excitement the submarine coming nearer. She had ceased firing and submerged, being now only 800 yards off with about two feet of periscope showing. The German commanding officer had evidently been warned at home to be cautiously suspicious, must have heard all about the *Baralong* surprises of last August and September, so he was taking no foolish risks. Coming within fifty yards of *Margit's* port side, he motored round her, gave her a careful inspection, and then went off from her starboard bow in the lifeboat's direction some 150 yards away. Well satisfied that the "Dutchman" was genuine, the U-boat next rose to the surface, the conning-tower hatch opened, and out poured three men. Up went the German ensign, and someone waved the lifeboat alongside.

But that was Hodson's selected moment! The enemy had arrived just where the British captain desired.

"Down screens! Open fire!"

Thirty seconds before the first shot left its gun, *Margit* had lowered false colours and hoisted the White ensign. The range had been underestimated at 700 yards, but gradually it was raised to 1100 by the tenth shot which seemed to reach its target: in fact the U-boat, having recovered from his surprise, hurriedly dived stern-first. It was now about midday, the German seemed to have sunk, wherefore Hodson gave the order "Cease firing," closed his boat, and the davit falls had just been hooked on to the latter, when the conning-tower of a submarine showed up—this time only seventy yards' distant.

Perhaps she had been holed—though we are aware from various incidents that a perforation or two did not necessarily incapacitate these U-boats—or perhaps her hydroplanes might have been damaged? At any rate she seemed to be in difficulties. Fire was again opened on her, but at such short range the guns could not without difficulty be given sufficient depression: moreover *Margit* rolled to the swell, and the target consisted of a conning-tower awash. But Chief Petty Officer Hines with his starboard foremost gun seemed to register a hit, whilst two more from the starboard after gun struck the water just over the German who now "twisted towards" the ship and bodily sank about 12.20 p.m.

Altogether it had been a curious and trying occasion. For most of three hours officers and men had patiently concealed themselves in cramped attitudes, unable to see what was going on. Unfortunately Hines had been killed by the foremost gun (after its

second shot) dismounting itself on him through its having been fired at extreme depression. Strange, too, that the enemy did not bide his time and sink *Margit* with a torpedo. There were plenty of opportunities, for the Q-ship remained in the vicinity until 4 p.m., yet nothing further happened. Now *Margit* got safely back into Malta, the Admiralty were convinced that a submarine had been sunk, Lieutenant-Commander Hodson was eventually awarded a D.S.O., Lieutenant Tweedie a D.S.C., and two of the crew each received the D.S.M. The sum of £1000 was likewise given for distribution among officers and men. Nevertheless, the plain fact emerges that the submarine did not sink. Sub-Lieutenant McClure in the lifeboat had a "front seat" at the engagement's opening, being about twenty yards from the U-boat. To his eyes certainly one shot seemed to strike her immediately below the conning-tower a bare minute ere she disappeared.

Here is a clear instance of how, amid a short spasm of excitement in a flash of time, one may be unduly influenced as to forming conclusions. Admittedly the circumstances all pointed to a submarine loss—especially as she put up no further fight; yet that stranger got back to the Adriatic, and on January 29 the German wireless in broadcasting this event added the erroneous statement that *Margit* tried to ram the U-boat. There is not the slightest question to-day of any destruction having taken place to the submarine other than temporary damage. At the time it was believed that two boats operated, and that the surviving one would on a future occasion identify *Margit*; wherefore the Admiralty decided to pay this Q-ship off, and her special service terminated on February 2 after less than two months' work.

Another curious feature that marked January 17 was that at the time when *Baron Napier* underwent her attack, a second steamer—*Baron Ardrossan*—belonging to the same owners (Messrs. H. Hogarth & Sons, Glasgow) happened then to be passing. She was six miles away, saw the shells splashing around, yet did not get to her sister's rescue. Owing to a foul bottom and being able to steam no more satisfactorily than some three knots slower, she could not reach *Baron Napier*, but felt cheered by the answering wireless call of *Margit* (as the "patrol vessel" coming to give help) intercepted on the radio.

It is not fully established, though highly probable, that this submarine was U-33 (Gansser), and that she did not return to

Cattaro till the second week in February, having in the meanwhile transmitted her daily reports in accordance with routine, and made further other attacks that ended more successfully. For later on the same day (January 17), and only twenty miles further east from *Margit's* position, the British S.S. *Sutherland* was destroyed by a U-boat's gunfire; next day, and another forty-four miles to the east, the British S.S. *Marere* endured a similar fate. Afterwards, however, this submarine seems to have reversed her course and leisurely cruised fifty-six miles nearer Malta, sinking by gunfire the British S.S. *Trematon* on the 20th. After that a profitless lull ensues, which induces the U-boat to quit the Malta region, steer south-east and seek ships bound to or from Port Said as well as Alexandria. Her judgment gained its reward on February 1 when she torpedoed one more British steamer (*Belle of France*) 126 miles north-west of the last-mentioned port.

At the same period Forstmann in U-39 had got into the Gulf of Salonika where he torpedoed the biggish steamer *Norseman* (9542 tons). This was January 22, 1916. Although she did not sink, and they managed to beach her, she had not been salvaged twelve months later, yet efforts were still being made in spite of the discouraging effects of bad weather and looting.

But in particular was Arnauld de la Perière showing himself a veritable scourge of the Mediterranean with U-35. This officer at the outbreak of war had been on Admiral von Pohl's staff as aide-de-camp, but before hostilities served as torpedo specialist in the famous cruiser *Emden*. Tall, slender, good-looking, serious of manner, with a strong character and determined mouth; well-bred, courteous, modest, brave; he was full of energy and most thorough in his duties. His crew found him somewhat reserved, yet very solicitous of their comfort. They idolised him, and indeed an extraordinary glamour belonged to this the ablest submarine captain that Germany ever owned in her service. Descended from one of the oldest French families, Commander Lothar von Arnauld de la Perière was son of a French officer taken prisoner during the war of 1870. After the conclusion of peace the latter had remained in Germany, become naturalised, and married a German lady.

During his early days in the Navy, the future "ace of aces" was subjected to a good deal of chaff for his Gallic name, but won the reputation of being a good sportsman and became very popular among his brother officers. His Mediterranean technique

was to rely on gunnery more than torpedoes, for which reason he had brought with him from the High Sea Fleet a first-class gun-layer. Armed with a couple of 22-pounders (one for'ard and one aft of the conning-tower), he usually opened fire at 6000 yards, gradually closing to 3000, but no nearer, until he saw the ship abandoned ; next he would approach within 100 yards and fire three shots into the steamer, one aft, one amidships, one near the bows. When putting to sea, U-35 carried 900 rounds of shells, and in nine months sank 220,000 tons of Mediterranean shipping, but by the time he finally departed from that sea in March 1918 after ten cruises, he had sent to the bottom 510,000 tons of shipping.

It is known that U-35 was at sea between January 11 and 22 (1916), but then had to regain Cattaro because of some motor breakdown.<sup>1</sup> He also had his first experience of being fired on by a "Dutch freighter," whose crew were already in boats ; but the "harmless" steamer surprised him when suddenly showing herself to be a Q-ship, and compelling him to do a crash dive. Thus, if *Margit's* opponent on January 17 was not Gansser, we may hazard a guess that de la Perière caused the trouble and had a very narrow escape.

His defects were made good and on February 19 he again put to sea, so that four days later he gambled for high stakes. Sighting the 46,359 tons White Star liner *Olympic* racing along the Mediterranean, U-35 on this occasion relied on a torpedo, which luckily failed to hit, and the great steamer which had been doing transport work in the Aegean got away. Still another three days, however, and when south of Cape Matapan he encountered *La Provence* (13,753 tons), a French liner then carrying 2000 colonial troops from Toulon bound for Salonika. Again he trusted in a torpedo, and this time with success : the steamer went down and 930 lives were lost. Next U-35 headed off till 120 miles south of this same cape, and on March 1 had a tough struggle with H.M.S. *Primula*. The latter was one of the previously mentioned "Flower" sloops, and it needed four of de la Perière's torpedoes before she would sink. Three men were killed but the rest were landed at Port Said.

Now in every one of these destructions is a powerful drama, but our space restricts most of the narrative. With a little imagination we conjure up afresh the pain and grief, the nervous and physical agonies of many a kind ; the terrible suspense of

<sup>1</sup> Thomazi, *ut supra*, p. 169.



sailors lingering between life and death. What, for instance, could be more remarkable than the story of *L'Amiral Charner*? She was an old-fashioned French armoured cruiser<sup>1</sup> built as far back as 1893. This 4700 tons ship, with a couple of funnels, two masts, and a speed of 18 knots was patrolling in February, 1916, off the Syrian coast and on the 7th she left for Port Said, where she was due to arrive next day. On calling her up, however, by wireless on the 8th no response came back. This suggested something sinister.

Patrol vessels searched diligently all the way from Cyprus to Port Said, but not a sign of her could be found until the morning of the 13th. At a spot thirty-five miles west of Beyrout the *Laborieux* sighted a raft on which lay the dead bodies of fourteen French seamen, but also it contained the *Charner's* quarter-master named Cariou still alive though starving. From this solitary survivor the pathetic story was learnt: how, about 7 a.m. of the 8th, a submarine's torpedo struck her when fifteen miles from the Syrian coast, and within two minutes she foundered.

Those old-fashioned ships used to succumb all too quickly, and the *Charner* had time to launch no boats, but a couple of rafts were put into the water. One disappeared never to be seen again—a fresh north-east wind blew later—and Cariou endured the bitter trial of watching his fourteen shipmates perish one by one in terrible sufferings. That he himself did not lose his reason, eating or drinking nothing for five days other than a few drops of rain falling from the skies, was a marvellous feat of self-control. To-day we know that the submarine was U-21, and her captain to have been Hersing, who had been at sea since January 22. On the very next day after *L'Amiral Charner* went down another submarine, without any warning, torpedoed the British S.S. *Springwell* in practically the same spot where H.M.S. *Primula* was to be sacrificed.

This opens up an interesting story.

The reader will not have forgotten our mentioning the Q-ship *Werribee*, which had been fitted out at Gibraltar and began her decoy service in November 1915. Under Lieutenant-Commander B. J. D. Guy, R.N., she had been cruising about the Mediterranean hopefully, but without any luck. On February 3, having taken in 2600 tons of sand ballast, this 3848 tons "tramp" was well down towards her marks and left Port Said with the object of

<sup>1</sup> Not to be confused with the 4604-tons steamer of the same name and nationality sunk on September 13, 1918.

steaming along the route to Malta. Forasmuch as so many attacks had been made on that lane, it seemed well worth while to keep on trying. Several more uneventful days ensued, but at 9 a.m. of the 9th she picked up wireless signals from the *Springwell* who had just been torpedoed and reported herself as sinking by the head.

More than once during the war a merchant steamer in giving her position, or making for a rendezvous, would be a few miles out in her reckoning ; and so it happened with *Springwell*. At once *Werribee* went off at full speed towards the spot indicated, which was twenty miles away. On the starboard bow, however, a distressed steamer was already in sight, so the Q-ship altered course and soon found her to be the *Springwell*, down by the head, heeling over to port, and her last boats just leaving.

The weather happened to be perfect, with a flat calm sea and extreme visibility ; the coast of Crete being just visible some sixty miles to the north-east. Altogether no conditions could have been better for long-range shooting and picking up a submarine's periscope. Imagine *Springwell* (5593 tons) now heading to the north, with her broadside towards *Werribee* whose captain thought the U-boat might be on the surface waiting only till the boats pulled clear before shelling. The decoy, pretending to be a typical tramp steamer, had just hoisted the Red Ensign and was steering to pass 300 yards ahead of *Springwell*, the time being 10.15 a.m.

No submarine showed up, though *Werribee's* people were at their concealed stations ready to open fire. After turning towards the four boats, her captain hailed them and asked where was the enemy ; to which *Springwell's* master answered that he sighted her half an hour after the torpedoing, close alongside his vessel. Commander Guy without stopping went close under *Springwell's* stern in order to read her draught and ascertain later how fast she might be sinking : he surmised that the enemy was not far away, but if the latter were not presently to be found, *Werribee* would be taken in tow for salvage.

But suddenly there emerged on to the glassy surface what seemed an "enormous" submarine,<sup>1</sup> painted that brownish green which pre-war Austrian battleships had once favoured. The time was shortly after 11, the enemy about 5000 yards distant and close to the *Springwell*. The German guns' crews were running to both their guns, and almost immediately opened fire, the range being excellent. With uncommon quickness the first

<sup>1</sup> Actually 210 feet long and 20½ feet wide.



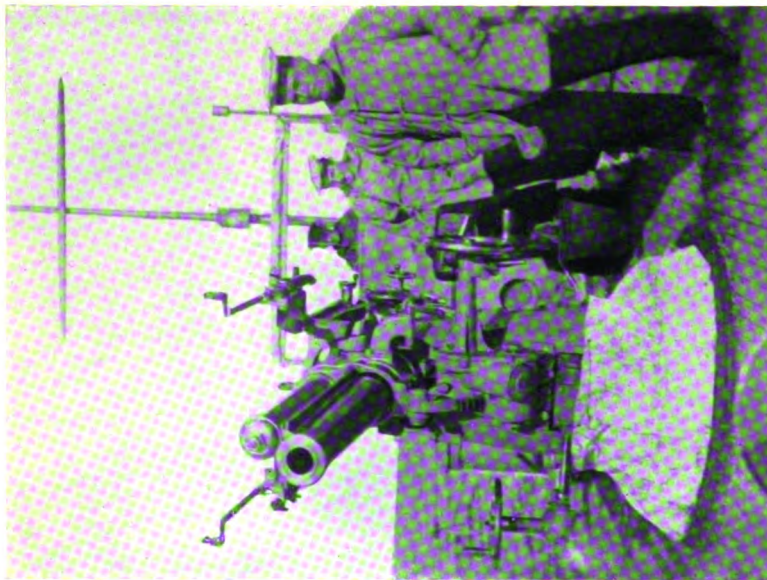
S.S. *SPRINGWELL*

The upper illustration shows her just after being torpedoed on February 9, 1916, 64 miles SW. by W. of Gavdo Island. The lower photograph shows her in the act of disappearing.



THE ZEPPELIN BOMB

Dropped when the enemy airship sailed over the Aegean.



A 13-POUNDER M.L. GUN

Showing foredeck of an Adriatic British motor launch.

two rounds were loosed off, falling fifty and twenty yards (respectively) over *Werribee*. It looked as if the next shell would hit, when her captain decided to haul round and feign running away. He had starboarded his helm, and the third round did hit—with such an explosion that he feared one gun's crew of the Q-ship had been disabled. Fortunately she had been struck further aft.

The tactics were exactly such as de la Perrière favoured, and it became obvious the German intended to destroy *Werribee* by long-range shelling and not permit her to play the little game of "abandoning ship." Can there be any doubt that *Margit's* submarine had let this German know Q-ships were patrolling the eastern Mediterranean; and that they tried to lure the U-boat into short range? I think the enemy by now must have guessed *Werribee's* true nature from her suspicious movements: as watched through the periscope, her character showed itself to be more than that of a friend in the hour of need.

At any rate the German's fire under such ideal conditions was so rapid, so accurate, that *Werribee* had been selected for the same fate as awaited *Springwell*. Both lifeboats of the Q-ship had already been riddled so that the usual "abandon ship" tactics were out of the question. What then?

What choice remained for Lieutenant-Commander Guy? How should he react to the situation, and make a big decision without doing anything impetuously? Always during these mystery ship engagements there came the moment of climax when the latter's captain must review the circumstances afresh and conclude whether or not the time had developed for direct action. Should *Werribee* to-day continue pretence just a little longer? Or, throwing off all disguise, make a straight fight?

Her captain chose the latter, and rightly so. The submarine was placed excellently for the British guns, being now abeam. Up went the White Ensign, and down came the mercantile Red Ensign. Within ten seconds *Werribee's* 4-inch quick-firer came into action, range 4000 yards. The first shot fell short, the next six fell so near that the U-boat ceased using her guns, the eighth shell seemed to be a hit abaft the conning-tower. Whilst to-day we know that was at any rate not a fatal wound, it sufficed to make the enemy play for safety and dive stern first in a cloud of smoke, the time being 11.10 a.m.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was a common but erroneous assumption during the war that when a U-boat sank stern first she was in a disabled condition; but many are the occasions when the submarine so dived hurriedly to evade certain death.

She hid herself beneath the surface, never showed herself to *Werribee* again, nor fired a torpedo at her : in other words, she had been thoroughly scared. How interesting would this duel have seemed to any of us ; and how excellent was the trap-ship's make-up ; may be appreciated from the remark of one who by the merest coincidence had the good fortune to be present. The master of the S.S. *Bakana* chanced to be coming along that area and had the surprise of his life when he witnessed what he described as " an old tramp, with a few patches of paint, firing at the submarine."

The incident having ended so suddenly, nothing for *Werribee* remained but to turn round, approach *Springwell's* boats, hail her captain, whom Lieutenant-Commander Guy advised in regard to the injured steamer. After examination it was found that *Springwell* had sunk further in the water and would never float into port : so the boats were picked up and the entire crew of seventy-three rescued. At 5.45 p.m. *Springwell* went down to her doom, and *Werribee* proceeded onwards, but the submarine would live to sink other steamers. We thus perceive how brief and fateful was any Q-ship's opportunity : unless her gunnery were of the very highest, and the range well calculated from the first, there could be little hope of success. That was why a Q-ship captain normally tried luring his enemy within a distance of less than 1000 yards, whilst an experienced U-boat captain would cautiously keep four or five times that remoteness. When any Q-ship had once revealed her real personality, and failed to destroy the German, the position was akin to wounding a jungle beast who would hope to have his revenge on some early occasion. If *Werribee* persisted in her special service she must repaint and disguise herself lest sudden ill-luck befall her : undoubtedly the Cattaro boats would keep a smart look-out for her destruction. Wherefore she did alter her appearance, and also her name, which now was changed to *Wonganella*.



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE SUBMARINE MENACE

**T**HIS Mediterranean war contained many a surprise apart from on land and sea, but it was largely because the enemy had looked far ahead into anxious possibilities. If the first submarine from Germany to these waters had been sent owing to fear that the Allies might break through the Dardanelles, so on the first night of February arrived a Zeppelin over Salonika. Why? Because all the troops there being assembled were creating uneasiness to the Germans and Turks, even though Gallipoli had been weeks ago evacuated.

"From our point of view," relates no less an authority than General Liman von Sanders,<sup>1</sup> "the Salonika Army of the Entente remained a constant reservoir for menacing the Turkish coast and threatened our only land communication with Europe, our sole bridge to the Central Powers."

One British officer tells me that when the Zeppelin dropped her bombs at 3 a.m. she was not fired on "owing to various weird orders from the French." One of the bombs dropped on the quay alongside an ammunition ship, and over a hundred small holes were blown into the latter's side. Later on during that same month, as also on March 27, aeroplanes were sent by the enemy not merely over Salonika but Mudros. On the other hand, the improved British aeroplanes on February 23 almost succeeded in their retaliation. Our reconnaissance had reported that lying in Kilia Liman (an inlet just north of Maidos) was a Turkish destroyer; so over the Dardanelles flew our aviators whose bombs missed the destroyer by only 50 yards. Next H.M.S. *Agamemnon* fired over the land—a distance of 14,000 yards—and her first shot actually got within 300 yards, whereupon the destroyer made off nor was seen again.

Those were the days, too, when the value of propaganda was being realised, and no little enterprise expended. For instance, some useful proclamations were composed on board H.M.S. *Russell* at Kephalo by a Levantine Englishman who had been a

<sup>1</sup> *Five Years in Turkey*, p. 101.

contractor's agent in Constantinople. Admiral Fremantle then had them translated into Turkish as well as Greek, after which they were printed by means of the printing press aboard the surveying ship at Kephala and distributed to our aeroplanes who on February 23 dropped five hundred copies over the Turks. But these were still the days of uncertainty, of apprehension, alarm, and wonder. Changes were being made all round, and ships intended for one purpose found themselves doing something quite different ; for example, seven paddle-steamers (in peace time accustomed to run excursions for trippers) which had been sent out from England the previous spring for mine-sweeping now were armed and ordered to take part in the blockade of Turkish and Bulgarian coasts, besides acting as patrols against submarines, for thus shallow-draught craft obviated the risks belonging to bigger ships.

The disadvantage of Admiral de Robeck's headquarters being on an island was obvious : although detachment from the mainland contained benefits, yet it could not be denied that an encirclement of mines might have serious results. Every day, however, at daybreak the trawlers would make a sweep with their wires right from Mudros boom defence for a distance of 15 miles out. So, likewise, trawlers were sweeping from Salonika outer boom for 15 miles to keep the passage clear for transports. This variation of life from the North Sea fishermen's duties at the Dardanelles came as an unbelievable blessing. At the latter they were so busy, and so relied upon for every sort of service, that leave was impossible, and the crews barely got time for sleep. When some of the trawlers were sent to Salonika and spent never more than twelve days at sea, but then came in for a spell of rest and recreation, a wonderful happiness glowed. Some of these men on stepping ashore at Salonika on January 15, 1916, who beheld live trams and real motor-cars running along the streets, had never been on land since April 16 of the previous year. But this sort of isolation was shared by many an officer. Captain Algernon W. Heneage (mentioned in a previous chapter), who was in command of the Aegean ketches subsequent to the Dardanelles evacuation, used periodically to visit the Greek islands in H.M.S. *Hussar* and inspect his units. On March 17 an opportunity was thus afforded to dine ashore : it was the first time he had been able to have a meal on land since the previous October.

A complete chain of trawlers and drifters (carrying lance-bombs and depth-charges) now existed between the Aegean



islands. It was an exceedingly monotonous life, with no amusement for the crews, and every commanding officer knows how difficult under such circumstances is the task of keeping up the men's enthusiasm. But towards the end of February (i.e. 25th) was revived once more that old scare about the Austrian Fleet—that it had come forth, been sighted off Corfu, was bound up the Aegean, and would make for Constantinople, there to join up with *Goeben* and *Breslau*, after which they were to sweep the Russian Black Sea Fleet into annihilation. Curiously, the Russians very much imagined this would happen.

In general it was the Mediterranean submarine outlook which worried the minds of the Allies' Admirals, and brought them to a conference at Malta lasting from March 2 to 9. Presided over by the French Commander-in-Chief, they sought together improved methods for defeating the U-boat, and finally decided on a partition of the zones in proportion with the number of patrol vessels of each nation. Whilst the French had 204 craft for ten zones and Italy 50 for covering four zones, the British had 332 to patrol four zones likewise: so the latest modification gave our units further extension east of Malta.

Of course the real weakness of the Allies' measures still was concerned with the two gates: the Gibraltar Straits, through which U-boats arrived from Germany; and the Otranto Straits which were permitted them to use at will. Not unnaturally therefore certain members of the Conference suggested concentrating the patrols at just these two straits, so as to render both entrances insuperable. But most of the Admirals considered such immunity unattainable, and they were also still opposed to the principle of convoy, preferring to rely on patrolled routes. At this date the flotilla based on Gibraltar comprised eight yachts (the *Valiant* having been added to the other seven), four armed boarding-steamers, nine trawlers, two sloops, and ten torpedo-boats. Having regard to the reliefs which must be made every few days, to the space not less wide than Dover Straits, and to the evasions by U-boats at night, this force was ridiculously inadequate. Also there existed the matter of Spanish territorial rights which were respected by British patrols though not by German submarines.

When we recollect that, apart from other national shipping, more than 100 British steamers with passengers or valuable cargoes were each day passing Gibraltar, it does seem strange that tighter efforts were not made for strengthening this western end of the Middle Sea. It was decided by the Conference *inter*

*alia* that the British Admiralty should send out from home to the eastern Mediterranean more small craft ; but since the only ones available were the new M.L.'s from America, six more should be assigned to Egypt, whilst eighteen were to be sent to Taranto for the Otranto Straits patrol.

Admiral de Robeck, who had gone to Malta in H.M.S. *Lord Nelson*, was back at Mudros by March 11, but less than a fortnight later occurred another of those incidents hundreds of miles from Southern Europe, yet destined to affect the Mediterranean vitally. On March 24 the passenger S.S. *Sussex* was crossing the English Channel when she was torpedoed by UB-29. Now it so happened that among the fifty passengers killed were several American citizens. This roused the United States Government's anger, and they sent a very sharp Note to the German Government. Of this the practical result was that the U-boat campaign against British merchant ships in northern waters from April 26 to the following September diminished, and from May 8 to July 5 ceased altogether. This in turn released during the ensuing few months about a dozen more submarines to work with Hersing and the five others, for Mediterranean operations would scarcely clash with American interests.

Thus for a second time that which had been for the Home Waters' benefit turned out to be a curse in the south, which had already quite enough complications of its own. Now it will be recollected that some time back we referred to the trouble with that North African tribe the Senussi, and saw how German submarines were wont to enter Sollum, off which H.M.S. *Tara* was torpedoed, seventy of her people becoming prisoners of this tribe. With a view to stopping these visits of U-boats, Vice-Admiral R. H. Peirse<sup>1</sup> (Commander-in-Chief at Port Said of the East Indies and Egypt station) wished to have mines laid. On January 14, 1916, H.M.S. *Latona* laid forty-five mines off Sollum and Bardia 12 feet below the surface, so placed as likely to catch any more U-boat visitors coming with arms for a disaffected tribe. *Latona's* job was not easy, it had to be done under the mantle of night, and the coast hereabouts was badly charted. Nevertheless she deposited them, as required, close in towards the shore—in fact so near that the cooking-fires of the Senussi could be smelled.

Then was created another of those sea mysteries which are

<sup>1</sup> He struck his flag on January 25, 1916, on being succeeded by Vice-Admiral R. E. Wemyss.

but rarely solved. H.M. trawler *Fulmar*, with one officer (Lieutenant J. A. Cowie, R.N.R.) and fourteen men, had been given the patrol off Sollum Gulf. Time passed, she failed to report herself; the coast was thoroughly searched, yet no wreckage could be found. So the weeks went by till the middle of March, when an expedition started against the enemy. On the 14th this British Military Force after leaving Barrani came in contact with the Senussi, who fled, pursued by the armoured motor-cars under the Duke of Westminster, and Sollum that same day was occupied. It was one of those rapid, brilliant side-shows that stimulate the imagination. Nevertheless, the preparatory operations had been going on for some time, a naval force moving with the advancing columns. The trawlers were quite indispensable, carrying troops and stores to Mersa Matruh, keeping a look-out for the German submarine which every few weeks used to bring supplies to the Senussi. Especially valuable were our naval units in their work of searching the coast and entering all indentations from Cape Lukka to Bardia, sometimes being fired upon by the natives, though the fishermen were not slow in replying.

As soon as the troops entered Sollum, along came the store-ships and water-ships; the harbour was swept for U-boat mines, anti-submarine indicator nets were laid, and trawlers began patrolling. The next development occurred in May. On the 24th came a report that enemy troops were about to attack Sollum, wherefore the mine-field off Bardia (that had been laid on January 14) began to be swept, H.M. Monitor No. 31 and H.M. Sloop *Mallow* being also sent. Early in June forty-two of *Latona's* forty-five mines had been swept up, and then the mystery was solved when the wreck of *Fulmar* revealed its existence. That trawler had fouled three mines and gone down with all hands. By one of those unfortunate mistakes, she had never received warning of *Latona's* laying, and blundered right on to the explosives.

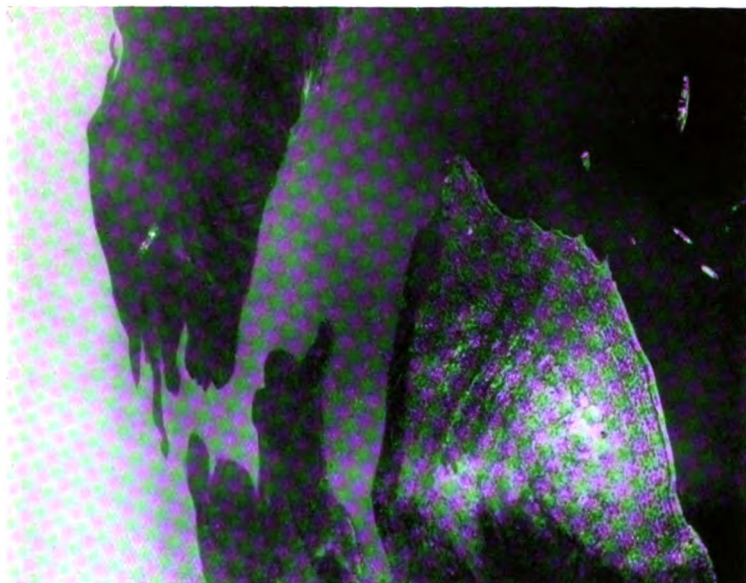
Not always did Germany employ her submarines to the best advantage: the sending of U-33 and U-39 to operate in the Black Sea is condemned even by German naval officers. The results accruing from this seclusion were scarcely worth mentioning, and they included the foolish attack on the Russian hospital-ship *Portugal*. She was off Rizeh at the time, towing a string of flat-bottom boats used for conveying wounded from shore to ship. One of these boats had shipped a good deal of water, so *Portugal* had been compelled to stop. Suddenly a periscope was seen,

then came a torpedo which missed, but now followed another which struck amidships and burst into the engine-room. The hull broke in two, her boilers blew up, and down she went. She had been one of the Messageries Maritimes steamers (5358 tons), and the culprit was Gansser in U-33. This incident occurred on March 17, with the loss of forty-five Red Cross people besides the same number of crew, and the only satisfactory feature is that no wounded happened to be aboard.

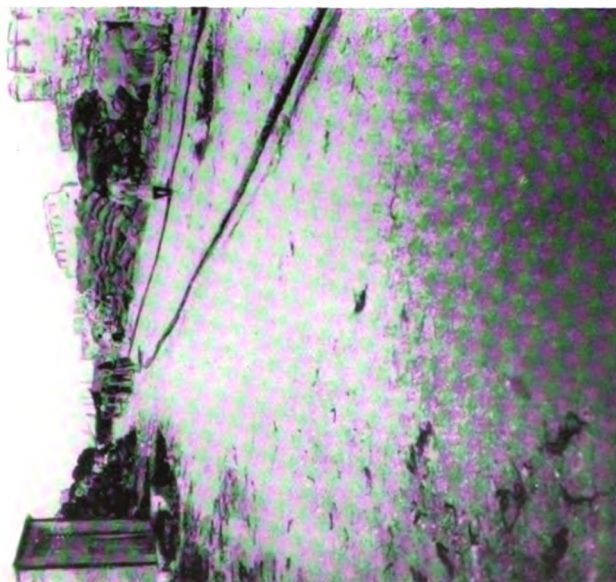
But we were on the eve of a fresh menace by mines, which would tax the Allies' resources (and especially in respect of the trawlers) to the uttermost limit. True it is that after Rear-Admiral Stuart Nicholson had been appointed the British Senior Naval Officer at Salonika in the autumn of 1915, the sweepers at once brought up five mines which were discovered just outside the boom: yet these had nothing to do with the present war, for they were old Turkish observation mines that must have been there more than three years. So also modern Turkish mines in March 1916 occasionally would break adrift from the others laid across the Dardanelles twelve months ago. One, for instance, drifted ashore at the previously mentioned Rabbit Island where a sub-lieutenant of the Royal Naval Division with sixteen men kept a perpetual look-out on the Straits, living a prolonged picnic.

An even stranger existence continued on the island of Tenedos, where a twenty-two years old lieutenant of the Royal Naval Division acted as Governor, his residence being a very picturesque Venetian building complete with moats, dungeons, machicolated walls, and a keep. Not merely did he command the 250 men of the R.N.D., who garrisoned the island, but saw that the local population of 6500 natives did nothing against the Allies' interests, or communicate with the Turkish Asiatic coast 4 miles away. Tenedos possessed four anti-aircraft guns, but it also had a wireless station which might be invaluable one day for reporting *Goeben's* movements.

Before we come to see the sudden and awful effects of German mine-laying beyond the Adriatic confines, our attention will be fully held by some other daring episodes which show the intense vigour that now dominated the Mediterranean campaign. The climax had not yet been reached, but the crises were becoming more acute and certainly more frequent. In other words, Germany, after twenty months of hostilities, badly needed results: she must begin gathering up a harvest of successes. In plain language, a more violent onslaught must be made against the British Mer-



PORT IERO, MITYLENE  
Note narrow, twisting entrance.



TENEDOS CASTLE  
Greek labourers working on drifters' nets.





SALONIKA  
Showing the Red Cross camp, harbour and shipping.

chant Navy, without which the armies in Salonika, Egypt, Mesopotamia could no longer be supplied. As part of this scheme a new phase was introduced on March 31. The S.S. *Goldmouth* (7446 tons) was steaming along the Atlantic and had reached a position 60 miles west-north-west of Ushant when she encountered one of the big U-boats armed with two guns. At 2.30 p.m. *Goldmouth* was torpedoed, but the Master found himself taken prisoner, this being the first of those detentions which were meant to cripple commercial shipping by robbing them of their best officers ; so that presently it became customary to include also as prisoner the chief engineer.

The persistence with which the Malta-Port Said and the Malta-Salonika routes were watched by lurking U-boats indicated the high pressure just now, yet somehow our counter-efforts always seemed just to fail. At 11.12 a.m. on April 4 the British sloop *Wallflower*, by example, narrowly escaped destruction, but equally just did not succeed in destroying her assailant. The scene (Lat. 36, Long. 19.25 E.) lay on the track between Malta and Cape Matapan, and the submarine with two periscopes momentarily showed herself on the port beam. She then dived and fired a torpedo, which *Wallflower* avoided by putting helm hard-a-starboard just in time, the missile passing only 15 yards astern.

The sloop then went full speed ahead and dropped a depth-charge on the enemy's estimated position, but the strange sequel was that the charge did not explode. For another twenty minutes *Wallflower* steamed about this spot, and at 11.35 a.m. this bomb for no apparent reason burst without warning, sending up a column of water 20 feet high. Exactly that which caused this delay we shall never know, but it was the opinion of Lieutenant Commander Guy Livingston, R.N. (the sloop's captain), that the charge had dropped on to the U-boat whilst the latter was stationary, but that when the submarine moved to avoid *Wallflower* the bomb fell off and then detonated. If this theory be correct—and there was expert opinion to support it—the German must have been thoroughly shaken up, though he got back safely to his base.

Depth-charges in those days were still somewhat imperfect and uncertain of action ; indeed by a coincidence a tragi-comic illustration occurred during that same week at Mudros. A British naval officer recorded it in his diary thus :

“ I hear one of the poor pilfering Greeks a few days ago found what he thought to be a treasure on the beach and proceeded to

pull it up by a convenient string. But it turned out to be one of our depth-charges, and his family are still collecting his bits."

Now we mentioned some time back the Q-ship *Baralong*, which had sunk two U-boats in Home Waters and then for good reasons was sent to the Mediterranean. She changed her name to *Wyandra*, and her new commanding officer was Lieutenant F. M. Simon, R.N. Picture her on the night of April 12 in Lat.  $36^{\circ} 24'$ , Long.  $15^{\circ} 8' E$ . (i.e. just south of Sicily) zigzagging at 11 knots. It was still an hour before midnight, and a fairly bright moon illuminated the sea, when a series of gunfire flashes became visible on the port bow, and shells flopped round the ship, some falling so near as 50 yards off. The practically invisible foe must be a submarine?

Course was therefore altered to starboard in order to bring the guns of *Wyandra* to bear, and fire was opened at the flashes, the estimated range being 3000 yards. It was possible to loose off five rounds against the enemy's six, after which the unseen stranger ceased fire; but the Q-ship's captain noticed that this discontinuance followed immediately after one of *Wyandra*'s shells burst with particular brightness "and probably struck the enemy." That was all the information obtainable till some years after the event, since no further signs manifested themselves and *Wyandra* cruised off to the eastward. To-day, however, we know that the submarine was none other than the historic U-21 of Dardanelles notoriety, and that the pioneer Hersing—death dealer to H.M.S. *Pathfinder*, *Triumph*, and *Majestic*, as well as the French *Amiral Charner*—was still in command. It surprised him when this "cargo" steamer after opening fire with her small defensive gun (such as many genuine vessels at that date mounted aft) let fall her screens, hoisted White Ensign, and made a genuine effort with her two heavier guns. In spite of all his experience, and having been the first German U-boat captain to roam the Mediterranean, this was Hersing's first experience of a "trap" ship. Nor had Lieutenant Simon exaggerated about that shell bursting brightly, though there is a slight doubt as to whether the explosion arose through contact with the submarine's steel hull or merely with the sea. This much we do know beyond all questioning—three pieces of the shell struck Hersing in the face and drew blood. He at once made a smoke-screen, retired under its protection, and then dived into obscurity. Let it be borne in mind that Hersing was one of the bravest and most enterprising submarine officers the world has ever known, yet he received



from *Wyandra* a terrifying experience. "We ran for dear life," he has been frank enough to admit.<sup>1</sup>

During the night nothing further happened, but at 7 o'clock next morning, still proceeding at 11 knots, *Wyandra* again sighted a submarine on the surface three points off the port bow and distant 10,000 yards. By this hour the Q-ship had got further north (Lat. 37° 5', Long. 15° 56' E.), being in the eastern approaches to Messina Straits. Both vessels were heading up for the Otranto Straits, but *Wyandra* now altered course one point to port so as to converge nearer the enemy; and half an hour later the U-boat lay two points forward of the port beam, range now 7000 yards.

Very significant were the facts that the submarine kept her course and speed (10 knots), nor did she show any desire to attack. It may be explained that 10 knots was the cruising speed of all the boats belonging to this class, and there can be no doubt whatever that this was again Hersing, on his way towards Cattaro or Pola. Having regard to his 10 knots, and to *Wyandra's* zig-zagging at 11 knots (but making a mean course of N 36° E.), this meeting-place would be just about where daylight should reveal them. Lieutenant Simon rightly inferred the enemy of last night and this morning to be identical. Reluctantly Hersing went into action, his gunners went to their job and fired a couple of rounds which fell short, whereupon Simon replied, which caused the German to turn away and cease shelling. It was noticed that she had been painted a grey so light as almost to be white.

The tactics here became more than interesting, but how aggressive would Hersing have shown himself had he only known that his opponent was the loathed *Baralong*—hated throughout all Germany for having destroyed two of their ablest U-boats! Now that Simon realised that the range became too great for the limited elevation of his own guns, he turned to bring Hersing ahead and chase him. This did not suit the German, who slowly dived and disappeared at 7.40 till she rose to the surface five minutes later, which confirmed the suspicion of her being too damaged for long submergence. *Wyandra* resumed fire—the range now being 6000 yards—and her projectiles fell so close to U-21 that after nineteen rounds the latter willy nilly must turn away and dive once more. She managed this time to get right away, carry on up the Adriatic, but afterwards come south for a special mission to North Africa. On her way home she tried her

<sup>1</sup> *Raiders of the Deep*, by Lowell Thomas, p. 76.

strength at a position 60 miles east of Malta—not so very far from the first duel with *Wyandra*—against another steamer, the *City of Lucknow* (3677 tons). But the latter was a genuine trader, and the torpedo which hit her without warning added another good ship to the long list of sinkings.

## CHAPTER XXII

### OVER THE SEA AND UNDER

**A**FTER sixteen weeks at Kephalo, where the two battleships now consisted of H.M.S. *Russell* and *Cornwallis*, Admiral Fremantle, on April 15, moved to Mudros, where also Admiral de Robeck flew his flag in the *Lord Nelson*.

This new arrangement enabled two capital ships always to be ready for eventualities, whilst the third could have fires out. Admiral Fremantle still remained in command of the Dardanelles Blockading Squadron, though it was intended that very shortly he should relieve Admiral Stuart Nicholson who would leave Salonika to command the east coast of England in succession to Admiral Ballard. A vast change had come over Mudros since the Gallipoli campaigning, all the regular troops (excepting some in Mesopotamia) having been transferred to France, whilst four Territorial Divisions were in charge of Egypt. Outside the Dardanelles every surface ship from the Gulf of Xeros to the south of Tenedos belonged to the Allies, if we omit a few Greek *caiques* which, under very stringent regulations, brought supplies to Imbros and Tenedos.

It was now the gallant aviators' turn.

At the instance of General Sarrail a night flight had been planned for dropping proclamations<sup>1</sup> over Constantinople; but incendiary bombs were also to be released over Zeitunlik powder factory or other suitable target. The three aeroplanes selected were piloted respectively by Flight-Lieutenant K. S. Savory, aged 21, an old Uppingham boy who at the outbreak of war had joined the Royal Naval Air Service; Flight-Sub-Lieutenant R. S. W. Dickinson, who only six months previously was a schoolboy at Eton which he left to join the R.N.A.S. before

<sup>1</sup> The spirit of these printed propaganda is indicated by the following extracts: "Cursed be Talaat, Enver, and Hauri. If a government does not act in accordance with the will of the nation, it deserves to die and disappear with all its sons. . . . Talaat and Enver have abused their trust, they have handed the country over to foreigners and done nothing else. . . . The whole Turkish Empire is in the hands of the Germans, who will surely bring about Turkey's end, and if Talaat and Enver, who sold the country, are allowed to remain in power we shall have no course open to us but to shed our tears awaiting our last day."

his nineteenth birthday, and Flight-Sub-Lieutenant I. H. W. Barnato, the son of a millionaire.

The distance from Kephalo to Constantinople by air is roughly 180 miles, so that the double journey of 360 miles would exceed any service flight so far attempted. "I never expected to see all the pilots back again," wrote Admiral Fremantle at the time. But there were few limits to the courageous undertakings of young birdmen, and they must expect a pretty hot reception no less than navigational dangers in a region where the weather changes with such short notice.

At 8 p.m. of Friday, April 14, the trio left Kephalo aerodrome under perfect conditions, and at 9.15 Savory passed over Marmara Island (in the sea of that name); but already the tricky atmospheric conditions were beginning to shift, clouds obscured the moon from now till the end of flight, rendering visibility difficult. It was noticed that San Stefano lighthouse (and three others) were still working.

By 10.15 Savory reached Constantinople and from a height of 1000 feet dropped 670 copies of the printed proclamations over the Stamboul area. He found the whole city lit up, and the outer bridge over the Golden Horn "a blaze of light"; but rockets and star shells after a few minutes burst up at him from the city. Not without considerable difficulty did he search for the Zeitunlik factory and descended to 500 feet. Severe firing reached him from a machine-gun, anti-aircraft guns (including pom-poms), and one large gun which barked slowly and doubtless was a big Krupps weapon. The airman's machine received two hits and still could not sight the buildings he wanted.

He therefore turned to find a suitable target and dropped eight incendiary bombs over Galataria aerodrome, setting alight the line of hangars and crossing this row twice. He then set out for home, observing that the San Stefano lighthouse no longer functioned. At midnight when over Marmara Island he ran into a bad thunderstorm with a strong wind, but at 1.45 gained Suvla Point and at 2.18 a.m. landed safely once more on Kephalo aerodrome. The distance record had been broken, and a new standard established for daring enterprise.

Dickinson reached Constantinople ten minutes before Savory, released his proclamations, as well as eight bombs on Zeitunlik, but during his return journey homewards the heavy weather and thunderstorms over Marmara delayed and exhausted him so that he flew across the neck of land westward and came down

off Cape Xeros near to one of our trawlers (No. 348) which had been specially stationed there. It was thanks to the alertness and good seamanship of Commander A. B. W. Higginson that Dickinson, as well as the most important parts of his machine, were saved. As to Barnato, he had sighted Marmara but turned back after the land became obscured and the weather developed unfavourably, arriving home at 11.45 p.m. in accordance with his orders. On this same night Squadron-Commander J. R. W. Smyth-Pigott flew to Adrianople, where he dropped pamphlets, besides bombs on the station, arriving home half an hour after midnight after doing 230 miles in the air. If Flight-Lieutenant Savory's exploit surpassed all the others, we shall in a later chapter find him beating his own record for what everyone considered to have been a great aerial triumph.

But such is the fortune of war, that tragedies by sea were not long in following. Admiral Fremantle had not departed from Kephala nine hours than just outside this place our destroyer *Bulldog*, by some mistake, was out of position and fouled one of our recently laid mines, blowing off her stern, killing two officers and five men, besides wounding others. This happened at 6 a.m. on the 16th. To her assistance promptly went the destroyer *Foxhound*, who, with cool courage, risked crossing the mine-field, got *Bulldog* in tow and for a second time crossed the danger line. This was done with skill as well as pluck, for the row of mines could be descried on either side of her! Perhaps the most extraordinary feature of all was that though these two vessels for over an hour lay within 6000 yards of the Turkish batteries, and at their mercy, not one gun fired. Are we to suppose that the German gunners were still slumbering, and the Turks dared not rouse them?

The hand of fate, however, was about to cause curious and startling results. A few days later Admiral Fremantle in H.M.S. *Russell* left the Aegean for Malta, before taking up his Salonika appointment. But, on April 1, U-73 had started from Germany for the Mediterranean, and she belonged to an interesting type. Measuring twenty-five feet shorter than U-21 and eighteen inches wider (that is to say 185 feet by 21½ feet) she belonged to the U-71-80 class; these being ten minelayers, slow of speed (6 knots for surface cruising and the same when submerged), but carrying thirty-six mines in addition to a couple of torpedoes and two bronze guns.

Her outward voyage took much longer than the predecessors,

and we can trace her track all the way from northern waters to the Mediterranean. Thus on April 5 she was sighted 80 miles west of Lindesnaes, on the 11th when 108 miles west of the Fastnet she shelled and sank the British barque *Inverlyon* (1827 tons), three days later the submarine was seen by the British S.S. *Magician* 100 miles north-north-west of Cape Vilano (Spain), on the 17th laid some of her mines off the Tagus which sent the Norwegian S.S. *Terje* to the bottom, and on the 19th, at night, passed through Gibraltar Straits, arriving off Malta on the night of April 26.

Her captain was Lieutenant-Commander Gustav Siehs, who had previously served in U-41 under Lieutenant-Commander Hansen before that boat and commanding officer were sunk by *Baralong* (*Wyandra*) in September, 1915. Siehs was now bound for Cattaro, but halted to lay twenty-two deadly mines off Grand Harbour, four miles from Malta, with the intention of trapping the French Fleet which were bound for Argostoli (as mentioned in an earlier chapter). It so happened that the *Armée Navale* left Malta the day before, and thereby a terrible series of disasters was casually avoided: yet even now the misfortunes were bad enough.

On the morning of the 27th H.M.S. *Russell* was approaching Malta when she ran right into the unsuspected trap.<sup>1</sup> "I was called at 5.30 a.m. and came straight on deck. The mine hit us at 5.37," writes Admiral Fremantle, "just as I'd got on the bridge. The Flag-Lieutenant brought me up my 'Gieve' waistcoat, but I was too busy to blow it up, so it did me more harm than good. I tried to blow it up in the water, but thought I could use my breath better, and desisted."

Immediately on being struck, *Russell* took a list of 10 degrees, yet the pinnacle was hoisted out by hand on the starboard side. The men were ordered on to the forecastle and starboard net-shelf to give them a better chance of getting clear when the ship should capsize,<sup>2</sup> but no one left the ship until the order was given to jump. The loss of life amounted to 126 people, and under the circumstances this was small—thanks to the excellent discipline which belonged to this ship through the efforts of Captain William Bowden-Smith, Commander F. E. M. Garforth, and Lieutenant-Commander Henry Grattan. Trawlers and other craft closed

<sup>1</sup> The position was lat. 35° 34' N., long. 14° 36' 40" E.

<sup>2</sup> At the Dardanelles, when both the *Triumph* and *Majestic* had been torpedoed, each capsized on foundering.

the doomed battleship, but it was a race against time. Shell after shell in the after turret exploded, smoke and flames rose through all the openings on the quarter deck, where the gassed and burnt men were placed before being launched on rafts. All of the midshipmen (with one single exception, because he was on watch at the time) were killed, having been asleep immediately over the explosion's position. With that great coolness and patience so characteristic of the men below, everyone in the engine rooms and stoke-holds stuck to his job till at the last moment they were ordered up.

One of the very few who escaped from the lower deck through a scuttle was Temporary Surgeon P. D. Pickles, R.N.V.R. Badly gassed, he left the ship on a raft with several wounded men, who were afterwards picked up by a trawler. All the way into Malta harbour this officer never ceased dressing the men's wounds, and having landed he worked himself to a standstill getting his patients into hospital. He then came to the hospital himself and died the next morning. Just before *Russell* finally went down, the Admiral removed his sea-boots (his Flag-Lieutenant, R. E. Jeffreys, helping him), but must have gone over with her when she capsized and in so doing been stunned. For he has no recollection of having entered the water and was picked up by H.M.S. *Harrier* (a torpedo-gunboat) on the side of his flagship opposite to that where everybody else had taken the water. He also damaged his foot so badly that the Malta Naval Hospital detained him for a month.

As if the loss of this 14,000 tons ship were not enough for one day, further trouble followed. During the forenoon H.M.S. *Wallflower*, a sloop mentioned in the last chapter, found a 5-horned mine on the surface and sank it, the exact position being five miles N. 85 E. from St. Elmo. At 10.25 a.m. H.M.S. *Marguerite* (another sloop) and H.M. Yacht *Safa-el-Bahr* sank a mine  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles north-east-by-east of Valetta, but at 8 p.m. one more sloop (*Nasturtium*) hit a mine in about the same area. She kept afloat for some time and then she sank, but at 10.45 p.m. H.M. Yacht *Aegusa*, whilst standing by her struck yet another mine and sank in seven minutes. Thus by causing three ships to perish in one day, U-73 had served her country's interests pretty thoroughly. Sweeping up this perilous zone became the task of Malta's trawlers and four sloops, but the casualty list was not complete for another week. On the night of May 4-5 when it was exceptionally dark with a strong south-east wind blowing, the ex-German

trawler *Crownsin* came steaming along her patrol, when all of a sudden she fouled a mine, being 6 miles north-east of St. Elmo. Down she went to join the others, all hands being killed or drowned excepting Skipper J. White, R.N.R., who had a remarkable escape: after being in the water for more than an hour he had the luck to be picked up by H.M. Trawler *Lynmouth*.

Now Siehs had become almost as notable an innovator as Hersing: U-73 was the first submarine mine-layer which ever entered the Mediterranean, but destined not to be the last. A sister boat (U-72) came out later in the year, yet whilst the Middle Sea by reason of its great depths could not be ideal for mine-laying, a little enterprise would enable certain harbour approaches to be rendered dangerous. Siehs reached Cattaro after a month's voyage on April 30, leaving in his wake a grave uneasiness to the Allies and a renewed demand for additional mine-sweeping trawlers and drifters. It was the old story, though pleaded with greater passion: for the whole available supply from the fishing fleets of the British Isles had been taken up by the Admiralty, and demands would have to be met only by weakening local patrols. With the advent of Siehs, German submarines in the Mediterranean now numbered a total of thirteen,<sup>1</sup> of which nine were working from the Adriatic and four from Constantinople. By the end of June thirteen had risen to fifteen, and in December it was twenty, though the peak month was December 1917 when the total reached thirty-eight. On the other hand we must remember that owing to a submarine's delicacy, the necessity for frequent and lengthy overhauls, the time needed for repairing damage to hull, hydroplanes, motors, and even periscopes, it was very exceptional when 50 per cent of the boats were actually at sea along the shipping routes. In fact most of the sinkings were done by a very few of the expert German commanding officers.

<sup>1</sup> This number does not include the submarines owned by Austria.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### LONG ISLAND ADVENTURE

**W**E have already<sup>1</sup> seen something of the operations that our smaller vessels were conducting in the Smyrna Gulf, and it is now time to complete that narrative.

The Smyrna Patrol, which in the summer of 1915 consisted of nine units including two destroyers, two trawlers, the seaplane carrier *Ben-My-Chree*, the two motor-gunboats *Marie Rose* and *Penelope*, was responsible for the blockade declared on June 2 against that part of the Turkish coast extending from Cape Baba (north of Mitylene) to Lat. 38° 30', Port Iero (Mitylene) being its chief base. Moreover it was an effective blockade. Southwards of the above latitude the French maintained a blockade to the Straits of Samos.

Our present story centres round the Monitor No. 30, belonging to that smaller class of 355 tons which drew only 4 feet and had triple expansion reciprocating steam engines. M-30 had also twin propellers and a maximum speed of 12 knots. Mounting two 6-inch guns, and one anti-aircraft 3-pounder, she was completed for sea at Belfast in July 1915, Lieutenant-Commander E. L. B. Lockyer, R.N., being appointed her captain, to whom I am indebted for certain information. Now the Admiralty decided to send her off to the Aegean via Milford Haven and Gibraltar, but immediately she demonstrated her waywardness when she ran aground twice on her way down from Belfast to the sea, and no one ever knew whether she intended to answer the helm or not. In a crowded anchorage with any wind about, she was just as likely to bump something before coming to rest. On passage through the Bay of Biscay she rode out bad weather excellently so long as kept hove-to, but was still awkward to handle under way.

M-30 reached the Dardanelles in time to take part in the Suvla Bay landing that August, and subsequently carried out bombardments of the peninsula. From September to the following February she was based on Mitylene, Port Iero with its narrow

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XVIII.

entrance and sheltered anchorage being very convenient. Protected by a net and a mine-field, there could be no fear of U-boats, but patrolling became dull and life aboard not too pleasant. In hot weather it was not exceptional for the Captain's cabin to register 110 degrees, and decks burned the feet : when winter came round the monitor was not less uncomfortable. During these chilly months M-30 used to board any suspicious steamers—usually Greek—keep the Asiatic coast in view in order to shell any caravans ; and occasionally be fired at by some concealed gun. It was likewise practicable one dark night in February to send a landing-party ashore at a spot in the Gulf of Adramyti, cut down the telegraph poles, remove the wire and interfere with the enemy's communications.

But this spring found M-30 sent to Long Island, there to assist in bombarding the Turkish batteries, which were decidedly on the increase. Influenced by the sight of these British ships not less than by the almost daily bombardments for which our aeroplanes spotted, the enemy concluded that we meant to take Smyrna whose population numbered 400,000, consisting mostly of Greeks. Gallipoli having been evacuated, the Turkish Vth Army could now take care of the Smyrna region ; but what Admiral de Robeck did not appreciate was the impending peril to Long Island, which the enemy had determined to capture at an early opportunity.

Its largest anchorage was off the island's north-west corner, where small vessels could lie at single anchor close to the shore ; another was at the south-west corner, with smaller ones at the north-east and south-east. At the southern end were posted a small detachment of marines, whilst a party of R.N.A.S. people had made their aerodrome on the northern end, since thereabouts existed the only bit of flat land. M-30 was able, at a range of 22,000 yards, to shell the entrance of Smyrna harbour and knock out a couple of guns, but by April it became obvious that Long Island would soon be untenable. At present it was uncomfortable, if not precarious, and the southern end had to endure attack from batteries perfectly concealed. This made it difficult for the monitor's shells to effect much damage in reply.

By April 23 (following a visit from Admiral de Robeck) orders were issued to evacuate the island's southern end, sending the marines and two field guns back to Port Iero. A week later the Turco-Germans were awaiting only a fair chance of making a surprise onslaught, after which the island must fall into their

hands like ripe fruit. Their idea was to choose the dark nights when the moon would be new, and to use the heights of Kara Burun peninsula (which overlooked the entire western side from north to south) for mounting their guns.

Finally the black hours of May 3-4 and 4-5 were selected, during which a couple of old tugboats towed some large lighters (carrying guns and ammunition) from Smyrna harbour to the eastern side of Kara Burun. It was a risky, and seemingly impossible, task for this slow cavalcade to pass safely by Long Island's south-west end, avoiding our patrols and interference. Nevertheless by 3 a.m. of May 5 the job had been accomplished, and the guns disembarked. During the day they were concealed, but on the following night (5-6) placed into position facing our north-west anchorage. Among the artillery were Austrian howitzers, and infantry were sent to protect them, arriving by night marches after following the coastline from Smyrna to the peninsula.

Of this achievement the Long Islanders had no suspicion, but on May 6 the latter were shocked when the new battery to the westward opened fire on the island's northern end, compelling the vessels to get up anchor and clear out; whilst every time an aeroplane came in from reconnaissance she, too, received hostile attention, which resulted in the aerodrome resembling a ploughed field owing to shell-bursts. Thus matters continued for another week, none of the anchorages being secure during daylight; and regularly every day one hour before sunset the new batteries would begin their attack against the aerodrome.

The final act of this drama took place on the night of May 14, and I give it in the words of Commander Lockyer who has written his account specially for this chapter:

"At about 7 p.m. I met at sea a drifter with petrol, bombs, and stores for Long Island. These were all transferred to my ship and the drifter proceeded with her other work. I lay off Long Island until about 9 p.m., when I proceeded to the northern anchorage, keeping close to the shore. It was very dark, the moon not rising till near midnight, and as I approached the anchorage I saw a flash and heard the report of a gun from Cape Aspro, but did not see or hear any shell fall. I anchored about ten o'clock in a different spot from my last occasion, and sent my boats away with the stores. They had just left when a shell from Cape Aspro fell close to me; as shells continued to fall I weighed anchor and steamed towards the enemy's battery

but could see nothing at which to fire. When shells were falling behind me, I altered course to the nor'ard, stood in to the island to pick up my boats, but the battery then opened fire again and M-30 was hit.

"The shell went through oil-tank<sup>1</sup> as well as one boiler, making a hole through the engine-room's bottom. The ship was completely crippled instantly, the water in the engine-room now floating the oil up to the hot fire-bars of the other boiler and causing a conflagration. I had difficulty in establishing communication with the shore, as my wireless had gone, but finally got in touch by flash-lamp. Long Island then called up a destroyer round the south end, and she arrived in about half an hour.

"By then I knew it was hopeless expecting to save the ship. So I kept the officers and ten men with me, embarking the remainder of my hands, together with wounded men and confidential books, in a motor-gunboat<sup>2</sup> which came alongside. I then decided I should not be justified in getting the ship in tow as the glare would have made any vessel an excellent mark.

"In about a quarter of an hour the upper-deck plating became very hot, and escaping oil caught fire round the ship. I sent the remainder of my crew to the destroyer, keeping on board three officers and two men. Whilst M-30 drifted towards Long Island we busied ourselves dumping overboard the ready-supply 6-inch projectiles, but the flames rapidly increased, and we then flooded both magazines. About 200 yards from the shore the monitor came to rest on the bottom, and here after letting go both anchors we decided there was no fun staying on board any longer: so embarked in the skiff and pulled ashore.

"The shelling had now stopped, but our anti-aircraft ammunition began going off, and we had to take cover behind some rocks to escape fragments of shells. The wireless communications between Long Island and Port Iero had broken down, so we left again in the skiff so as to pick up, or be picked up by, one of the other vessels, which we knew would be somewhere about. Early in the morning M-32 rescued us and brought us that afternoon into Port Iero."

Two days later a party of two officers and eleven men came from Mudros in the destroyer *Chelmer* to see if they could salvage the guns. They arrived by 10 p.m. at the back of Long Island, and

<sup>1</sup> This monitor carried 45 tons of oil fuel.

<sup>2</sup> The *California* mentioned in Chapter XVIII. She found M-30 listing and blazing, but managed to take off fifty survivors under heavy fire, one shell cutting the rope joining the two vessels.

(one of these officers informs me) "after a fearful cross-country walk in sea-boots, carrying tools, etc., we got a boat and went off to the monitor." There now began a difficult and dangerous task which could be attempted only between darkness and dawn lest the enemy's shells should interfere: for the Turco-German battery lay only 6000 yards away, and it was noted that seventy-one projectiles at 5.30 p.m. whizzed across to deluge the aerodrome.

The water was surprisingly cold, but the work generally went on from 8.30 p.m. till 3.30 a.m., and in less than a fortnight breech mechanisms, sights, guns, anchors, cables, the remaining ammunition (notwithstanding the wind and nasty swell) were recovered, put into a motor-lighter, and taken round to Port Iero. After gutting her of all odds and ends, a 100-lbs. charge of gun-cotton was placed in the magazine, she blew up in two portions—the after part falling upside down on the other—and M-30 could never fall into enemy hands. For one more week the Turco-Germans still gazed out at Long Island's canvas camp and aviation station, but on the night of June 4 they sent a numerous boat flotilla from Gieulbagche Bay (situated southwest of Long Island) and the expedition landed. Although the hangars still stood, the British had departed, wherefore our enemies now occupied the place and placed guns here as well as at the northern extremity of Kara Burun and Menemen on the opposite shore. Thus with both horns of the Smyrna Gulf well fortified all future entrance of the Allies would be out of the question; so Smyrna remained Turkish till the end of this war.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### ADVENTURES EVERYWHERE

**I**T was on June 2 that Commodore Heneage, after returning from leave in England, and rejoining H.M.S. *Hussar* at Malta, started out for the Aegean to continue his command of the ketches. Accompanying him went Admiral Fremantle, now recovered from his injury, and bound for Salonika, there to hoist his flag aboard H.M.S. *Exmouth* in succession to Admiral Stuart Nicholson. That port contained also the French Admiral Moreau, whose flag flew in the *Vérité*.

Events were rapidly trending towards further tension between Allies and the Greeks, but the deciding influence could be only naval force. The Greek Government was in full accord with the Germans, which is to say anti-Anglo-French. On May 28 the Bulgarians had descended the Struma valley, and the Greeks, without the slightest resistance, had allowed them to occupy the Greek Fort Rupel. From this it was obvious that Greece had no intention of being neutral and would need pressure from the Allies instantly; but to no one did intervention so clearly seem requisite as General Sarraill.

Many criticisms, and some praises, have been made regarding this soldier. One who was acquainted has described him to me in the following brief sentences, which convey more than might be expressed in many pages: "An ill-bred, not very pleasant face. Civil without being courteous. A fine, big man, evidently having energy, determination, and masterfulness." The latter intended to advance, but at the beginning of June was delayed by the Serbians, who had only eighteen guns instead of ninety; and this Struma move, containing in itself a threat to the security of his *armée d'Orient*, caused him no little uneasiness. On June 3 he declared a state of siege at Salonika, taking over direction of the public services such as police and railways.

This action created considerable stir in Athens, where also the British, French, and Russian Ministers met and then urged their respective Governments to note the need of another naval demonstration. Greece could not be trusted, and she must be

distrusted: not words but deeds—not promises but acts—were to be obtained. Her army would have to be demobilised, her ministers replaced, a new general election to be imposed which could be relied upon to guarantee a benevolent neutrality.

On June 8 the French Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Dartige du Fournet, was ordered by his Government to organise the naval demonstration against the Greek capital, and on the above date Vice-Admiral Moreau occupied Thaso Island, which lies eastward of Salonika and westward of Dedeagatch. Presently a considerable Anglo-French fleet was got ready, since the situation in Athens became acute—an assault being made on the offices of Venizelist papers and a demonstration outside the British Legation. This fleet was to be under the orders of Vice-Admiral Moreau, one of those charming gentlemen of the sea with whom it was a pleasure to serve, and the meeting-place should be at Milo.

To co-operate with him, Rear-Admiral Fremantle was given: the battleship *Exmouth*; two light cruisers, *Forward* and *Foresight*; two sloops, *Peony* and *Azalea*; four destroyers, *Harpy*, *Mosquito*, *Staunch*, and *Comet*; two monitors, *Earl of Peterborough* and *M-17*; the seaplane carrier *Empress*; together with two torpedo-boats, two net-layers, eighteen trawlers and drifters. Commodore Heneage was to take charge of the sloops, trawlers, and drifters, flying his broad pennant in H.M.S. *Hussar*. In all, the British ships numbered not less than thirty-five. The French were to provide five battleships and two armoured cruisers, together with fourteen destroyers.

Now the scheme for this demonstration by such a strange variety of vessels is well worth examining. The five French and one British battleships were to be directly under Vice-Admiral Moreau, whilst the light cruisers and all the other vessels were assigned to Rear-Admiral Fremantle. At 4 a.m. of June 22 the Anglo-French destroyers and mine-sweepers, supported by monitors and light cruisers, accompanied by net-layers and the seaplane carrier, were to begin a careful search of the Athens Gulf for mines and submarines. At 11 a.m. the six battleships and two armoured cruisers were to arrive, steam round the Gulf, and anchor in the Salamis Strait, the entrance to which would have been meanwhile netted. Immediately afterwards five transports carrying 9000 French troops should reach the Piræus. These soldiers were "forced" on the admirals by General Sarraill only at the last. At 11 a.m. the Ministers of the Allied Powers

were to have presented their demands, and if not complied with by 3 p.m. the French troops should land and march up to Athens. Lipso Island was also to be occupied. At Salamis the Greeks had their arsenal and dockyard, but their fleet consisted of only six armoured ships—three being old, small, and slow—two light cruisers, and eighteen destroyers or torpedo-boats. There could thus be no doubt of Hellenic inferiority with regard to the Allies' Fleet.

On June 18 came great activity, which coincided with the time when Admiral de Robeck was turning over his Eastern Mediterranean command to Admiral Thursby whom we saw in a previous chapter leaving the Adriatic. Through many anxious months, including the Dardanelles campaign, and for long after the evacuation, Admiral de Robeck had been serving in the Aegean, but now the time had come for his return to England and a well-earned change. On the evening of the 18th Admiral Fremantle took *Exmouth* from Salonika to Mudros, there shifted his flag to the light cruiser *Forward*, and then went off at 18 knots to Milo, reaching that island at 8 a.m. of the 20th, where he found Commodore Heneage with his flotilla.

The Admiral summoned his captains on board to explain the plan of operations, and the torrid heat of an Aegean day in June was endured impatiently awaiting final orders from Salonika which, however, did not arrive till a destroyer brought them next day: accordingly at 5 p.m. of the 21st the slower vessels, consisting of the two sloops, two monitors, trawlers, and drifters, with H.M.S. *Hussar* left Milo, whilst the Admiral was due to sail with his squadron at 11 p.m. To-day the troop transports started likewise from Salonika. Admiral Fremantle says that at 7 p.m. of the 21st the French flag-officer at Milo received a wireless message which could not be deciphered but seemed to indicate that the operation was to be postponed; nor did definite orders to this effect reach the British Admiral till 10 p.m.—only an hour before the time for sailing. He recalled Commodore Heneage, whose flotilla came back into Milo next morning with sad disappointment. Finally after another day of suspense arrived a telegram at 3 a.m. of the 23rd saying that Greece had accepted the Allies' demands. King Constantine had taken heed of what the Fleet signified: but an international crisis barely was prevented. For three out of the five French transports had left Salonika at midnight of the 20-21st, and the Battle Squadron was actually weighing when fresh orders reached them. There



remained nothing now but to disperse the Anglo-French Fleet, and the various units returned to their normal duties.

That the Allies obtained their desires without appearing off Salamis or the landing of one soldier—still less by the firing of one shot—was very much to the good. The humiliation imposed might otherwise have been too much for King and people. Whilst the Greek Army had no inclination to enter any war; the landing of foreign troops, the bombardments, the arrest of German officers and agents might have been the beginning of serious troubles. Street fighting with heavy losses, destruction of civilians and property, would have roused passions of indignation even in those favourably disposed towards the Allies. But just as the mere threat by Allied warships had succeeded in the previous December, so it did in June. At any rate a military occupation of Athens might have committed us to another of those expensive side-shows, with a correspondingly increased responsibility to be borne by the sea service. Battleships, earmarked for dealing with *Goeben*, would be tied down in Salamis Strait whilst the demand for transports, trawlers, and drifters would be less bearable than ever.

Still, the Greeks would have to be watched even now; and only the Allies' perpetual readiness to assemble in naval strength, at short notice, could ensure that Germanophil sentiment would not become too dangerous. We shall return to see what happened later on that summer, but in the meantime whilst Salonika continued to wax more important than ever, the submarine problem was creating some exciting moments. True, that Greek port just now possessed a strange cosmopolitan attractiveness with its mixture of uniforms and nationalities. A French naval Commander was Captain of the Port, with a British Lieutenant-Commander for his assistant, helped by a brother of the disestablished Greek Captain. A Levantine was serving with a French commission as naval paymaster, whilst Serbian officers would be seen wearing uniforms made in England or France. Every passenger coming ashore or departing would have to be identified by British and French secret agents, their luggage being searched by British and French sailors as well as a Levantine woman. Greek soldiers continued to assert their rights to guard the Salonika quays, yet no one paid any heed to them, and the British Admiral still proceeded with the French Admiral to maintain this port as the base of an army for 400,000 men.

With prodigious expense, and almost the ingenuity of a magician, more auxiliary vessels this summer were added to the list and sent south from the British Isles. Two dozen drifters with their nets and depth-charges reached Brindisi from Falmouth by the end of June. Six paddle-steamers early in July escorted by an armed steam-yacht arrived at Malta from the Cornish port ; and the M.L.'s were reaching the Mediterranean by many a transport. In spite of all this the submarines did pretty well what they liked, and de la Perière during his three weeks' June cruise sank twenty steamers and twenty-one sailing vessels, no fewer than twenty-six of the forty-one being Italian.

In the Otranto Straits Admiral Mark Kerr was faced with the same problem that had exercised the mind of his predecessor and seemed insoluble. Drifters were now laying their nets across between Cape Otranto and Cape Linguetta, the northern limit of this defence line being Lat.  $40^{\circ} 25'$  and the southern being Lat.  $40^{\circ} 10'$ . All that the U-boat need do was to come up the Straits on the surface till sighting the drifters, and then with periscopes showing follow the nets till a gap revealed itself, which were precisely the same methods that many a German submarine employed for negotiating Dover Straits. Of course uncertainty existed for both parties, especially as wind and current made a perfectly straight line impracticable. Thus there might be an ugly serpentine twist which could just as easily provide a narrow passage as a trap.

Of this a good instance occurred on July 7, when a U-boat was coming north from her Mediterranean trip. She had reached Lat.  $40^{\circ} 13'$ , Long.  $18^{\circ} 33'$  E., but misfortune got her entangled in a drifter's nets. The spot was where submarines had so often come through, and very close to that where the drifter *Restore* had been sunk on October 12, 1915 ; but on this 1916 occasion a notable thing happened, which meant high praise for the fishermen. Certainly the submarine escaped and got into Cattaro, where she angrily reported how dangerous were the British nets. The sequel occurred immediately. At daylight on July 9 an Austrian light cruiser raided the line, sinking the two drifters *Astrum Spei* and *Clavis*, damaging *Frigate Bird* and *Ben Bui*. She might have "mopped up" a few more, but two Italian destroyers appeared in sight, and the Austrian hurried off at high speed.

The British casualties amounted to ten killed, eight wounded, and nine missing : martyrs to the existing system of an inefficient

barrier. Many of these fishing vessels had wooden hulls, and not one of them was a fair match against surface vessels. Was it fair to leave the drifters so little protected and so obviously inviting attack? Admiral Kerr requested more destroyers, who would both be a defence for the net-layers and drive the submerged craft blindly into the steel nets; but no destroyers could be spared from the British Isles, and neither the French nor the Italians were able to supply any more.

So the dilemma went on as before, and undoubtedly another raid would be attempted whenever the obstructions became exceptionally inconvenient. To-day it is quite clear why July 9 had been chosen: not exclusively was revenge or intimidation the inspiring cause—but necessity. Cattaro knew that a second U-boat was due to come north through the Straits on July 10, and the raid was intended to make the passage clear. Actually they failed to drive the fishermen from their posts of duty, and the submarine fouled the steel meshes. The story is as follows.

In almost the same spot, but slightly farther east (Lat.  $40^{\circ} 17'$ , Long.  $19^{\circ} 10' E.$ ), four drifters had laid their nets. Reckoning from east to west, they were *Garrigill*, *Carol and Dorothy*, *Bono*, and *Meg*. About 12.30 p.m. Skipper H. Goldspink in *Garrigill* was steaming along the line, and was just passing the *Carol and Dorothy* when a look-out thought he saw a submarine. Simultaneously the *Carol and Dorothy's* buoys indicated something had caught, and down went her nets. A strain so heavy came on the latter that Goldspink ordered them to be slipped, for, in spite of the drifter's engines going ahead, the invisible U-boat was towing her astern. Depth-charges were dropped, and the drifters cruised about till the evening, highly expectant. About 9.30 p.m. two explosions were experienced, and *Meg's* nets were bearing a terrific strain, the wire tow-rope hanging directly up and down, dragging the drifter a further 6 inches into the water.

The situation continued all night until 10 a.m. of the 11th, when an effort was made to tow the entrapped submarine; but the wire rope parted, and up came a lot of oil, air-bubbles, and "white, woolly-looking stuff." Samples of the first and third were taken and brought eventually into Brindisi. After examination the former was found to be heavy mineral oil, such as used for lubricating engines: the other was wool from mattresses, or cotton waste used for cleaning the motors. The inference is that, in accordance with well-established U-boat practice, the enemy had released these oily wads to feign disaster. The explosions

came from the net mines as well as the depth-charges, and it is possible that two submarines (though this is doubtful) were present. But the remarkable fact emerges that not one was sunk, although this could not be known at the time. Skipper Goldspink received the D.S.C., and the sum of £1200 was awarded between the four drifters. As a consequence of the raid, Admiral Kerr shifted the drifter line at nightfall of the 11th farther south so as to stretch from Cape Santa Maria di Leuca across to Fano Island, which would make any attackers come farther south and therefore be more liable to being thwarted. Wireless was being fitted to some of the drifters, and messages could be sent 45 miles. As a further help, arrangements were made for a torpedo-boat to be with the drifters and warn them to slip and run either for Otranto or Fano.

The above July submarines were Austrian, but now we come to speak of the German class UB-42-47, which came by train to Pola in sections and were they assembled in 1916. They were of only moderate size—121 feet long and 14 feet 10 inches broad—possessed a surface cruising speed of but 5 knots, whilst they could do only 6 knots for one hour when under water. Carrying but four torpedoes and a 22-pounder (besides a Maxim) gun, this type was better suited for the Adriatic than the North Sea. UB-44 had recently been put into service, and on July 30, 1916, was very close<sup>1</sup> to that position in the Otranto Straits which we have just seen to be frequented by the enemy. But her commanding officer, Lieutenant Wäger, made a serious mistake.

At 6.30 this morning she got into the nets of *Quarry Knowe*, and Skipper W. Bruce had the same experience as the drifters a few days before. The heavy strain—the tow-rope riding up and down—were both noticeable; but also were seen air-bubbles rising to the surface. To *Quarry Knowe's* aid rushed *Garrigill*, *Meg*, and *Bono*. Two depth-charges were dropped, and eventually the nets parted. The latter were 120 feet deep, submerged at 12 feet below the surface, had mines attached to them, and it was the explosion caused initially by the depth-charges which holed the submarine till she dropped. Entangled and full of water, she thus drowned Wäger with all his crew. Such a success did much to encourage the drifter men, notwithstanding their undefended isolation.

<sup>1</sup> Given as Lat. 40° 12' 30", Long. 18° 46' 30" E.; but drifters not infrequently were a little out in their reckoning. At any rate, it is quite clear that hereabouts was the regular track for U-boats.

So the tragedies and surprises, the comedies and disappointments, went on week by week throughout the Middle Sea. It was because enemy submarines had been destroying so many sailing vessels that a small sailing craft was purchased, fitted with an auxiliary motor, armed, and given the name *Mona* (alias *Zeus*). Commanded by an R.N.V.R. officer who was accompanied by an ex-assistant paymaster (who became transferred to R.N.V.R.), she left Malta together with H.M. Submarine E-2 on a decoy voyage, the idea being for *Mona* to attract the enemy and the British submarine to do the rest.

After two days at sea a large U-boat off the east coast of Sicily was enticed and came towards them. Everything looked favourable, the German seemed ready to "eat out of the hand," and E-2 would presently loose off a torpedo. Nothing could prevent a very neat victory, for this ruse had been tried in the North Sea with great success. Alas! Just at the wrong moment E-2 was caught by the heavy swell and broke surface: still more unluckily the enemy saw, dived hurriedly, and disappeared from the scene. That disclosure completely spoilt *Mona's* chances for all time. Would not the German wireless a warning to other U-boats? *Mona* in fact would be made a target at the very next opportunity.

The latter now lost touch with E-2, who was remaining under water in the hope of "Fritz" coming back soon to the surface. After a while *Mona* under motor-power made towards Malta, but on looking astern, her captain realised that the worst had come. Six miles off could be descried his enemy in surface trim, and coming along towards her. Shortly would be heard the whistle of shells. And then . . . ? So the unprotected sailing vessel was abandoned and sent to the bottom, rather than be allowed to fall a victim. Next came a destroyer along, who picked up the adventurers and brought them into Malta, where also arrived E-2. Judge of the remarks that were made when it was learned that E-2 was also the submarine which had followed 6 miles off!

Strange does it seem that Mediterranean Q-ships, with all their disguises of appearance and tactics, their days and nights of constant vigilance, their ubiquity and variation of routes, never achieved so many results as fell to the Otranto drifters. Somehow, decoys in the Middle Sea never quite got their deserts, though it is hard to see why. Let the following narration, however, show how difficult was the task.

At the end of March 1916 the S.S. *Redbreast*, which had been employed carrying supplies to Mudros, was fitted out for chasing

submarines. She looked most ordinary and unlikely to arouse suspicion, but nothing happened until the forenoon of July 16 this year. She was steaming along that busy route from Malta eastwards towards Crete, when to the south of Cape Matapan<sup>1</sup> and at 10.30 a.m. she sighted something strange 6 miles away on the starboard bow, but scarcely visible without glasses. Shortly afterwards the object shaped itself into a U-boat steering north-east to head off the Q-ship.

There now ensued a battle of wits between the German and Lieutenant G. S. Brown, R.N., *Redbreast's* captain. Sending his men to action stations, the range was closed to 6000 yards, when the enemy did a quick dive at a big angle in preparation for torpedoing; but by altering course five points to port and increasing speed to 12½ knots this put the German off his attack. The latter therefore returned to the surface ten minutes later, showed up on the steamer's starboard quarter, and opened fire with his gun. Ten shells—all good for direction but 200 or 300 yards short—were loosed off, after which Brown was about to stop engines and pretend to abandon ship. But just as he was going to ring down to the engine-room "Stop," the enemy must have seen some item that aroused nervous doubt even as the boats were being cast loose. For the German had suddenly changed his mind, could not be tempted to renew his attack, but went off.

Brown, however, had not finished.

Having sent a wireless signal to all men-of-war that he was steering west, but would shortly be going back disguised as a Greek steamer over the last position, and requested friends to keep clear, *Redbreast* whilst proceeding at full speed gave herself a different appearance by painting funnel and boats white, lowering derricks, spreading awnings, and so on. At 1.10 p.m. she swung round and steered to pass 10 miles south of where the enemy had been previously encountered. With Greek flags painted on her sides and the Greek ensign flying aft, *Redbreast* was now along the Messina-Alexandria route.

By steaming at easy speed the Q-ship had reached the original spot at 4.30 p.m., but no submarine could be found, wherefore half an hour later course was altered for the Cerigo Channel at 11 knots. Two and a half hours elapsed, and a submarine revealed herself half-way out of the water. There she rose—only 500 yards from the port bow—and this seemed *Redbreast's* great chance.

<sup>1</sup> Exact position Lat. 35° 40' N., Long. 21° 54' E.

Alarm gongs were rung from the bridge, and the moment this U-boat's deck emerged clear seven British projectiles shot across. Three hit, the first blowing off the conning-tower's top, killing the captain, who was leaning over the fore part, half in and half out, with his arms folded.

Black smoke then issued from the boat—either because of a conflagration or (more likely) intentionally produced as a screen—and she dived into obscurity. Unquestionably she was in a bad way, listing heavily to port, and Lieutenant Brown reasoned that she would either founder or make for the Adriatic. *Redbreast* accordingly spent the night cruising about the scene, and informed two trawlers to look out. She was painted a light slaty-blue, and identified as the same submarine met with earlier in the day. Lieutenant Brown was awarded the D.S.C., two of the crew were given the D.S.M., and the sum of £1000 was awarded to the ship. Nevertheless that submarine was not destroyed. Remarkable though it may be, she got back home in spite of her wounds, and this narrow escape must be reckoned in the same category as that of U-93<sup>1</sup> and several other enemy submarines.

<sup>1</sup> Related in Chapter XVIII of my *Danger Zone*.

## CHAPTER XXV

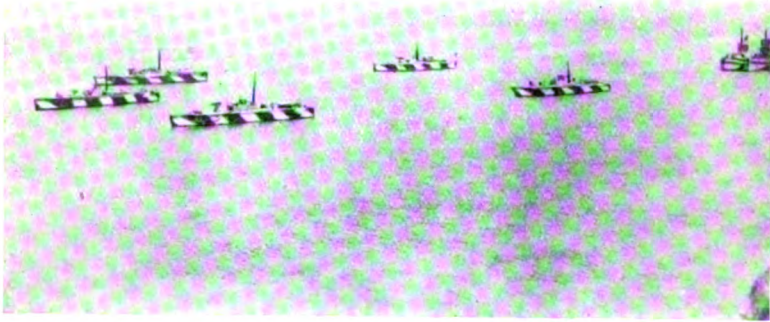
### THE ATHENS INTERVENTION

**I**T was in July (1916) that the crews of trawlers and drifters, who had been serving in the Mediterranean upwards of a year, began to be sent home, so that the men might be rested and their ships refitted. Both aims had become overdue, yet personnel and vessels were almost indispensable. What could be done?

The only thing was to replace each dozen units by another twelve sent out from England, even at the expense of weakening areas along the British Isles. Some of these trawlers that had spent long weeks in the Aegean never came back south, but were ordered up north into the White Sea. Strange contrasts for the fishermen after cloudless skies and sizzling sun! So, too, more and more excursion paddle-steamers this summer came out from home for mine-sweeping in the Mediterranean: yet it was surprising not only that so many pleasure ships existed, but that they should be seen under such curious circumstances. Naval officers marvelled at beholding a squadron of six paddlers approaching Malta under the escort of H.M. Yacht *Jeanette*; hard-case master mariners passing them in the Bay of Biscay scratched their heads and wondered "What next?" as they watched red paddles racing, and grey hulls diving to the Atlantic swell. *Duchess of York*, *Duchess of Richmond*, *Duchess of Norfolk*, *Stirling Castle*, *Marchioness of Lorne*, *Minerva*—and the rest—would they ever come back to bump alongside the piers of pleasure resorts?

But now the M.L.'s despatched from England (some under their own power via the Seine and Rhône, Marseilles, and Riviera; but usually by the all-sea route on a steamer's deck) were coming into more general and universal prominence. Their operations as a whole were distinctly minor, with certain exceptions; yet the practical value of these craft, with officers mostly consisting of yachtsmen, was that they filled gaps which the lack of other auxiliary vessels had left empty. Enthusiasm, intelligence, reliability: those were the qualities which the R.N.V.R. captains brought out with them besides their seamanship acquired in





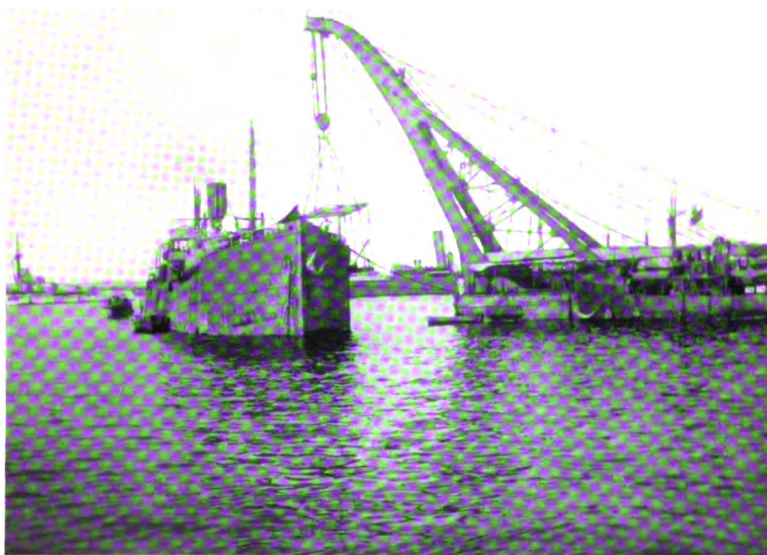
#### IN THE OTRANTO STRAITS

The upper photograph shows the British motor launches (in their striped paint) at work off Fano Island. The lower illustration represents the conspicuous lighthouse of C. Santa Maria di Leuca—a favourite landmark for enemy submarines coming up the Straits.



H.M. STEAM YACHT *CATANIA*

And an M.L. painted so as not to resemble a submarine in the distance.



LAUNCHING THE FIRST M.L. AT TARANTO

She has just arrived by S.S. *Daleby* from England to patrol the Otranto Straits.

small yachts during many summers. And whatever criticisms may be made against the design, the build, the temperament of M.L.'s, they were surprisingly good in a seaway when properly handled. At 15 knots, keeping the seas about a couple of points on the bow, the boats would do wonders in bad weather where drifters might be having a rough time. If only the M.L.'s had been more solidly constructed and more heavily armed, with a greater length and displacement, many things might have been done that were left undone. But one of the most striking, if amusing, items of post-war information was to learn of the awe with which U-boat captains regarded these 80-footers. Thereby one realises how effective is an early rumour, and how difficult will be the task of correcting false ideas. In a stand-up fight between an M.L. having a 13-pounder, and a U-boat armed with a 4·1-inch gun plus one 22-pounder ; between a slender wooden vessel and a steel one of double hull ; the victory is plainly assured to the German. Only if the latter submerged, and the M.L.'s speed enabled depth-charges to be dropped at the right moment and the right spot, could the yachtsmen expect to win. Where the M.L.'s persistently succeeded was by their mobility on patrol (as compared with the slow drifters and trawlers), their invisibility at a short distance, as well as their handiness.

At a time when the Royal Navy was so short of vessels that anything afloat which had engines received welcome, these newly built M.L.'s came most opportunely. Unlike the other patrol craft, they could be shifted about wherever a need existed, and some were ordered out to the West Indies. The first four to be employed in the Otranto Straits were Nos. 168, 170, 172, and 174. They came out in mid-August, 1916, on the deck of the tramp steamer *Daleby*, which was carrying also some thousands of tons of coal. These M.L.'s were unloaded at Taranto, where the British Adriatic Squadron (then comprising H.M.S. *Queen*, *Prince of Wales*, *Venerable*, and *London*) were still stationed.

Known as the British Adriatic Motor Launch Patrol, a beginning was thus made this summer of an interesting organisation. As mother-ship there presently arrived from Egypt the steam yacht *Catania* under Commander the Duke of Sutherland, R.N.R., and the five then moved off 45 miles south-eastward to the Italian harbour of Gallipoli. Later on was used the far smaller *Tricase*, which possessed the geographical advantage of being on the east coast facing Otranto Straits. Little more than a fishing village and bathing pool, with a narrow rocky entrance, and very

little water, the authorities at first considered it ideal for M.L.'s until the latter's captains protested against its inadequacy, and propellers damaged to resemble cauliflowers proved it. During the winter Tricase was blasted out (as were some of the Italian workmen), the entrance channel improved, and only then did it become convenient as an advanced base for M.L.'s. Now these little motor ships were not intended for the local patrols, but to move up and down the drifter line for the latter's protection and in readiness against U-boats trying to burst through. Gradually the numbers increased until by the following summer there were twenty-eight M.L.'s, but then more arrived from the Aegean base at Mudros.

We have said that M.L.'s were hard to see, and especially was their grey paint difficult to be distinguished from that of a submarine; for which reason it would have been possible that some mistaken identity might create a tragedy. It was considered advisable, therefore, to paint the wooden hulls with white diagonal stripes. (See photograph.) In those early days the M.L.'s were forbidden to work within five miles of the Italian coast, yet with all the German cleverness our late enemies seem to have taken little advantage of opportunities, preferring with amazing conservatism to negotiate that same centre of the Straits where drifter nets had always been found.

Gibraltar, Malta, and Port Said were further strengthened with M.L.'s, which led to an unusual incident this summer. The British transport *Bellview* (3567 tons) was on her way from England to Egypt and at 10 a.m. of September 17 had reached a spot south-east of Sicily. Most of the voyage was over, and her deck load of four M.L.'s would soon be launched at Port Said.

Suddenly a submarine was sighted on the starboard beam, so Captain J. E. Churchill altered course to bring the enemy astern, the steamer's defensive gun aft was got ready, extra hands were sent into the stokehold for more steam, but the M.L. gun-crews were also called to their stations. It was certainly a curious precedent that ships within a ship should be called upon to fight, yet the advantage of four extra guns could not be denied at such an emergency. Action did not commence immediately, and the U-boat disappeared for two hours till she approached rapidly on the starboard quarter. Captain Churchill therefore ordered his gun to fire, and the enemy replied, but next Lieutenant Joynson, R.N.V.R., engaged with the 13-pounder gun in M.L. 248, whilst M.L. 206 assisted. This firing went on from either quarter, as

the ship zig-zagged, until one o'clock when a German projectile struck M.L. 234 (situated on the forward well deck), went right through her as well as the steamer's deck down to the hold. But half an hour later the British guns had been too much for their opponent, who received a hit, ceased firing, and turned broadside on : he had never contemplated such a battery aboard a ship of that size.

Actually the M.L.'s saved the *Bellview* from being sunk ; for whilst the steamer's 15-pounder was able to get ten rounds off, the gun then became useless owing to a defect in the recoil. The M.L.'s on the other hand fired forty-nine rounds, and the nett result was that whilst the U-boat (which was painted a greeny slate colour) lay on the surface licking her wounds, *Bellview* hurried away over the horizon after an action lasting eighty minutes, the range having been about 6000 yards. Captain Churchill was awarded a D.S.C., but we should not forget that full praise belongs likewise to the yachtsmen officers and their men.

In spite of all the manuscript records which still survive (though many are quickly fading and scarcely decipherable), there are gaps which will never be filled ; for comparatively few data have come out of post-war Germany in respect of submarine affairs. We should like, for example, to know a little more of the visit by U-35 this summer when she brought a personal letter into Cartagena<sup>1</sup> for King Alfonso from the Kaiser. That happened on June 21. A few weeks later U-34 also made a cruise to Spanish waters concerned with German Secret Service activities in Spain ; but Rücker found our patrol craft too awkward for his venture, so that he could not carry out the orders, and returned unsuccessful to Cattaro.

On the last day of July Rear-Admiral Fremantle, having been appointed to command the 9th Cruiser Squadron, turned over his duties at Salonika to Rear-Admiral Hayes-Sadler. The former arrived *en voyage* at Taranto on August 3. Only six hours previously in this harbour the Italian battleship *Leonardo da Vinci* (22,340 tons) had most mysteriously blown up and capsized in 36 feet of water, with the loss of 250 lives. There she lay, but 400 yards from H.M.S. *Queen*, a pathetic spectacle bottom uppermost. She had cost over £2,000,000 to build just two years previously, and that the loss should take place not during gallant action but within harbour made the irony more biting. Neither

<sup>1</sup> U-35 entered Cartagena, and then moored alongside an interned German steamer, replenished with oil fuel, and departed next day. After sinking ships in the western Mediterranean she reached Cattaro on July 3.

submarine nor mine accounted for the disaster, the probability being that of spontaneous combustion of some charges in the magazines, as caused the terrible destruction of H.M.S. *Natal* in Scottish waters.

From August 1916 to the following April was fought the intensest period of submarine warfare. The approaches to Salonika had been mined. On August 3 H.M.S. *Clacton* (originally one of the best-known English pleasure steamers) was sunk in the Aegean, and next day H.M. Yacht *Zaida* was torpedoed in the Gulf of Alexandretta; eleven officers and men missing whilst the rest were taken prisoners. Disappointing, too, was the loss of S.S. *Inverbervie* (4309 tons) which took place on September 14, seventeen miles south of Cape Rizzuto, which is below the Gulf of Taranto. The submarine who torpedoed that steamer, however, achieved more than perhaps she meant. *Inverbervie* was carrying four M.L.'s to Taranto, and one may regard it as very bad luck that after coming almost to the threshold of their port, three of them thus went to the bottom. The fourth succeeded in floating away from the sinking transport, and actually proceeded to her patrol later. Other M.L.'s, which had been carried out from Portsmouth to Taranto, thence proceeded under their own power to the Aegean via the Corinth Canal.

Another proof presented itself on August 26 that the Otranto drifter line, if still very far from perfect, was becoming a great inconvenience, especially to U-boats freshly arriving from Germany via Gibraltar. Admiral Kerr had already asked for an aircraft patrol over this exposed line, yet some time had yet to elapse ere a seaplane base came into being; wherefore the obvious happened. The enemy had already attacked the drifters by (1) submarine; (2) light cruiser; (3) mine. There remained the probability of assault by aeroplanes, but to counteract these the Italians had supplied our drifters with thirty-seven small anti-aircraft guns in the proportion of about two guns for each group.

At 7.30 this August morn, whilst the Otranto drifters were across the Straits, H.M.D. *Craigbo* (Lieutenant Knight, R.N.R.), in charge of a group, sighted three aeroplanes coming from the north. When the latter got near enough to be identified as Austrians, he signalled the group to slip nets. At 6.45 two of the visitors had dropped a couple of bombs over the drifter *Rosies*, the second striking her on the foredeck so that she sank within two minutes, the crew getting off in their boat at the last moment, though not before firing their rifles at their opponent. The third

aeroplane had selected *Craigbo*, whom she attacked with machine-gun fire, but without hitting, and was joined by the two other Austrians after sinking *Rosies*. The trio then manœuvred round, used their Maxims, but were kept at bay by the drifters' guns. Occasionally the aeroplanes would swoop low, but would be met by the combined reply from the other drifters who had already closed on *Craigbo*.

Thus repulsed, the enemy at 8.20 came back to knock out *Craigbo*, and dropped six bombs : all fell very close, yet nothing worse happened than sending up sea water that fell on the decks. It was an exciting interlude, but the drifter's wireless operator never moved from his job and remained by his instrument flashing out signals. So the enemy had shot his bolt, nothing more could be done, and away went the three, streaking back through the sky homewards. Two days later Italy declared war on Germany, but on August 27 Roumania also entered the war on the Allies' side, though soon to indicate that they were not going to be so helpful as had been hoped.

The trouble with Greece, which had been settled last June, again flared up in August and the situation promised endless anxiety. It seemed probable that, Germany having imposed on Bulgaria the task of invading Greece and isolating Sarraïl's army, the next step would be for the Hellenes to be employed against the Allies. At any rate Constantine, the Kaiser's brother-in-law, exhibited anything but sympathy with the Allies' cause ; whilst Venizelos (who passed away at the age of seventy-one in March 1936) had not the slightest hesitation that the Allies were bound to win the war and that the duty of Greece was to be on the Allies' side. It was the sharp clash between the royal (but parochial) mind of Constantine and the long-sighted Venizelos, which just now was responsible for domestic uncertainty : yet that which worried the French especially was the fear of Constantine's frail neutrality quickly transforming itself into firm animosity. Therefore drastic measures should be taken at once by sea, notwithstanding that 2200 Russians and 23,000 Italians had recently been added to Sarraïl's considerable forces, which already numbered half a million.

The French were in truth the driving force with regard to this new undertaking, and British co-operation was to follow rather by the power of logic than voluntary enthusiasm. If the new intervention were to repeat the previous naval demonstration, a more serious result would follow. It was on August 26 that the



French Commander-in-Chief received orders to prepare for a concentration at Milo, and thither once again were to come the British Squadron ; the whole Anglo-French Fleet being under the orders of Vice-Admiral Dartige du Fournet, who, on August 28, reached that island in the new Dreadnought *Provence* (23,177 tons, ten 13.5-inch guns).

This force in general respects was similar to that used last June, but now more powerful. It comprised, besides the flagship *Provence*, H.M.S. *Exmouth* (flagship of Rear-Admiral Hayes-Sadler), six more French battleships, two French armoured cruisers and one light, two British light cruisers, three British monitors, two British sloops, two British net-layers, one British seaplane carrier, one French seaplane carrier, two French gunboats, one British mine-layer and one French, four British and twelve French destroyers, two British torpedo-boats, twenty-five drifters and trawlers, plus H.M.S. *Hussar*. Total seventy units.

In the latter Commodore Heneage arrived at Milo from Mudros, and to him was entrusted the whole advanced squadron numbering fifty units—trawlers, drifters, sloops, destroyers, etc. Just as officers were doubting whether, after all, the expedition would come off, orders were received by the French Commander-in-Chief, on the last day of August, to take the fleet to Salamis and there arrange with the Allies' Ministers for transmitting to the Greek Government a memorandum insisting on control of the posts and telegraphs ; and expulsion of German agents. It was Admiral Dartige's purpose to dominate the Greek fleet besides taking over the German steamers which had been lying in the Piraeus since the outbreak of war.

Thus sudden instructions came at 9.30 p.m. of Wednesday, August 31, for Commodore Heneage to raise steam, and (in spite of the darkness) all his fifty vessels got safely out to sea through the net defence of Milo. This officer tells me that at 10.30 a.m. next day they arrived off Pleva Island where sweeping for mines began, the sloops *Honeysuckle* and *Aster* being followed by the four British destroyers, *Hussar* and others. All went well, any boats in the way were cleared out, but our seaplane reported a large fleet in Salamis Straits. " So off Lipso Island I had to stop and send *Rattlesnake* [a destroyer] ahead, and as soon as she reported the Straits clear I formed the trawlers up to sweep the Straits. All this time the Greek guns were turned on them ; also two destroyers and a seaplane came to look at us. Fortunately neither side opened fire. We then turned back, and off Pleva



Island met the Allied Fleet, and led them through the swept channel to Salamis Strait at 16 knots. They anchored inside, and we remained outside for the night. The Lipso guns were trained on the fleet all night. Later on we went inside the nets." The latter had been laid from Keramos Point by H.M.S. *Prince Edward*, to protect the Battle Squadron which had left Milo that forenoon and arrived early in the afternoon.

No opposition was attempted, the three Greek armoured ships plus torpedo-boats and submarines, thirteen German or Austrian steamers, were all seized and on September 3 the Greek Government yielded to the terms of the memorandum delivered on the previous day. The old Greek battleship *Hydra* (4808 tons) and a couple of torpedo-boats abandoned their royal allegiance to join the French Admiral's flag, and he sent them on to Salonika. When, however, the King of the Hellenes refused to enter war on the Allies' side, M. Venizelos departed from Athens to his native island of Crete. Altogether the situation was a little complicated and even illogical: notwithstanding that we had forced our way into the harbour, seized their fleet and telegraph offices, yet the people were quite polite. When Admiral Hayes-Sadler and Commodore Heneage went ashore to visit the sights of Athens they were even saluted in the streets by Greek soldiers.

But towards the end of October salutes were less freely made. Not only had the Greeks been influenced by news of German successes over the Roumanians, but matters were again tending towards a crisis ashore. So as to avoid serious incidents, a further demand was made of the Greeks after Admiral Dartige had placed the Greek fleet in such a position that if any trouble arose the latter could be shelled with ease. He insisted on the light craft being sequestered, the bigger ships disarmed, and the shore batteries being occupied by the Allies. To all such ruthless coercion Greece bowed her head.

By November Salamis had become a French naval base, where the Greek workmen continued their employment though under the direction of the Allies; but on the last day of this month it became evident that something unusual was happening at Athens; some sort of mobilisation of volunteers and reservists being made. In short, trouble was brewing. So next morning were landed parties of marines from the British and French ships, with instructions to occupy the hills overlooking Athens; the barracks and powder factory; besides other positions. This disembarkation ended before 5 a.m., but there was manifested

during the forenoon an angry hostile spirit by the Greeks and inevitable clashes followed, which in turn became more serious as the hours sped by. Rifle shots were exchanged, small guns were brought to bear on the places where Anglo-French marines had been stationed, and the situation looked extremely ugly. Before 5.30 p.m. it became necessary for the fleet to open fire with their guns, and this had the desired effect of immediately checking the Hellenic attack. During the night, and after exchange of prisoners, the parties were withdrawn to their ships, the Allies' losses being 54 dead, 134 wounded, whilst the Greeks lost about 40 killed. Many Venizelists were slain by their compatriots.

The nett result of this serious, and regrettable, incident was twofold. Certainly it taught the untrustworthy Greeks a serious lesson, and they professed themselves clearly as having no intention of joining our enemies in the European War. An Anglo-French blockade of Greece was enforced until such time as reparations were made for the attacks on our landing-parties, and the Greeks had no choice but to accept. Finally, on January 29, a ceremonial salute of the Allies' flags was made at Athens. Minor events continued to cause apprehension, but in June the King was compelled to leave the country, and Venizelos (returned from Crete) again enforced his will; so that after all the doubts and suspense, the double-crossing and deceptions, Greece eventually did enter the war—not on the side of Germany and Bulgaria, but definitely as one of our allies. Indeed, no fewer than 100,000 Greeks were serving in the Salonika Army during the year 1918.

But, contrasted with all this gain, there was the compulsory retirement of Admiral Dartige du Fournet. His task had been rendered both difficult and personally distasteful; for Great Britain, Italy, Russia, and many French leaders of thought had been opposed to this forceful manner of dealing with the Hellenes. Admiral Dartige had made an excellent commander-in-chief, his relations with British flag-officers had been most cordial, and upon them he had left an impression of courtesy, animation, professional ability, and great personal energy. But politicians in all countries can do an immense amount of harm in the fewest days, forgetful of all the distinguished service which a great Admiral has previously rendered. Just as Dartige must now be recalled and condemned to inactivity owing to political clamour, so Jellicoe some months later was to be driven from being First Sea Lord of the Admiralty.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### APPROACHING THE CRISIS

**A**LTHOUGH three more Q-ships were sent for a while to the Mediterranean during the autumn of 1916, it cannot be denied that what with the enterprising ability of the "Big Six" and the additional boats which had almost trebled this number, the enemy's submarines were still dominating this sea.

At that period the Germans were in a state of exaltation, and their officers could rightly claim everywhere to have made notable records. In September U-53 startled the world by being the first submarine to reach America from Europe under her own power. U-boat operations extended so far north as the Polar Ocean, three of them regularly this autumn went on with their work as far south as the Canary Islands, so there seemed no limit to their daring. Nevertheless de la Perrière still held the first place, not merely in his own sphere but universally. The latter half of September saw him in the western Mediterranean—off Algeria, Spain, and the Balearics—adding success to victory. He torpedoed the French sloop *Rigel* on October 2, and proceeding eastwards two days later off Sardinia met with the French S.S. *Gallia* (14,966 tons) which was on passage from Marseilles with troops for Salonika. At 5.30 p.m. U-35 torpedoed her although the Frenchman was zigzagging at 18 knots, the range being 900 yards.

Here we have yet another of those instances where a transport full of troops is a most helpless affair. Including crew, there were 2700 men on board. Panic seized them, in spite of the Captain's example of cool courage. Boats were carelessly lowered, overcrowded, capsized, and the ship took 600 human beings down with her. Next day the French cruiser *Chateaurenault* happened to pass this scene and picked up 1200 survivors, 300 others being rescued by patrol vessels. On this same October 4 another submarine, 195 miles east of Malta, without any warning sank the Cunarder *Franconia* (18,150 tons); and a month later, on November 6, the P. & O. *Arabia* (7933 tons) was sunk 112 miles west by south of Cape Matapan.

The biggest shock of all happened on November 21 when the huge 48,158 tons White Star liner *Britannic*, then acting as a hospital ship, sank in the Zea Channel with the loss of twenty-one lives. She had 1100 wounded on board, and Germany untruthfully stated that the ship was carrying fresh troops. The loss this time had nothing to do with torpedoes but with mines, and only after a long while did the fact emerge that these had been laid an hour before by Siehs in U-73 who had been responsible for the loss of H.M.S. *Russell*. Now all this was most unsettling; we could not patrol the extensive Mediterranean routes effectively; and the trawlers (unlike those in the North Sea) were instantly regarded by every submarine as enemies: for no British fishing vessel arrived in the Mediterranean except for hostile purpose. And the deep waters of the Middle Sea were all in favour of the U-boats' navigation. Not that the latter got away scot-free every occasion, as U-35 discovered on September 26 when de la Perière shelled the British S.S. *Dunrobin* (3617 tons) whilst the latter was steaming between Majorca and Cape San Sebastian. The steamer replied with her defensive gun so fiercely that if she did not cause actual damage, she made such accurate shooting that the submarine hurriedly dived head first at an angle of 45 degrees.

So, too, up the Euxine our enemy had her unpleasant surprises. In the middle of September one evening the *Goeben* went from her berth in Stenia Creek, Bosphorus, to the Black Sea and steamed eastward, only to find herself at ten o'clock next forenoon in action with the newly commissioned Russian super-Dreadnought *Imperatriza Marie* (22,700 tons) with her four turrets of 12-inch guns. Whilst the Germans were well aware she had been under construction for some time, it was quite unknown that she had become one of the Black Sea Fleet. The result of this encounter showed that the Russian 12-inch guns could outrange the *Goeben's* 11-inch, and only by high speed, zigzagging, besides good handling, did the German battle-cruiser manage to extricate herself out of a very tight corner. During four exciting hours the Russian chased her till within about seventy miles of the Bosphorus, and *Goeben* had the good fortune to spend that night once more in Stenia Creek rather than the bottom of the Black Sea.

Soon afterwards the *Breslau* was damaged at long range by the *Imperatriza Marie*, but the latter after her sudden short blaze of success mysteriously blew up in Sebastopol on October 20, 1916. During this autumn *Breslau* (who had been fitted with 15-cm. guns instead of 10.5 cm.) laid mines at the entrance to the Sea

of Azov. These quick-change reversals were further accentuated by the Black Sea losses of UB-7, UB-45, UB-46, and UC-15 between September and the first week of December, all being destroyed by mines. The worst of the latter is ever that they may be more dangerous to friend than foe: a small mistake in navigation, or the effect on moorings through bad weather, can bring sudden death all too quickly. Some mines, for example, were specially laid on the western side of Otranto Straits not far from Santa Maria di Leuca to entrap submarines making up the Italian shore towards the Otranto lighthouse. Unfortunately the drifter *Michaelmas Daisy* got amongst this danger patch, and blew up with the sacrifice of two officers and ten men.

The Italians asked for British monitors to protect the army's right flank in the extreme north Adriatic, so H.M.S. *Earl of Peterborough* was sent round from the Aegean and reached Venice on December 4 as the first of her class to be seen in the Adriatic. She had thus travelled from that part of the world where intrigue and political animosities had become powerful; where amid international suspicions the British alone had earned confidence as having no ulterior motive. Even the newly equipped Serbians had now become slovenly and depressed, yet the arrival of Admiral Troubridge among them once more had a most heartening result. He was able to perform magnificent work, and the Serbs thought no end of him.

Further responsibility must devolve on the Otranto drifters presently by the advent of four more submarines coming out under their own power from Germany, and most interestingly their voyaging attracts us. First, let us take U-52 (Lieutenant-Commander Walther Hans) who had motored down the Bay of Biscay, and on the night of November 25-26 was 90 miles west of the Burlings—those lonely islands off the Portuguese coast just above the Tagus. By the hand of fate that famous old French battleship *Suffren*,<sup>1</sup> which had been in the thick of it all during the Dardanelles campaign, and survived many a threatened death, now must come north to meet this submarine. The poor *Suffren* badly needed a refit, she could scarcely steam, being quite unable to keep up with the *troisième escadre*; but the Mediterranean yards were too full of work, so she was ordered to Lorient. Having called at Bizerta and Gibraltar, she came ambling along doing her 9 knots, when she reached that spot west of the Burlings. This November night was just the kind of late autumn weather to

<sup>1</sup> See her record in my volume *Dardanelles Dilemma*.

be expected off the Portuguese part of the Atlantic—a heavy sea, and a hard wind. Hans thrilled with joy at beholding the slow, obsolete, quite unescorted ship positively inviting trouble. He torpedoed her without difficulty, and she foundered immediately—as those ancient vessels did—with the loss of her Captain Guépin, his 647 officers and men. Not a soul was saved. The *Suffren* at 9 knots gave herself to this very able Hans in the simplest manner : and it was the latter, who, on the previous August 19, had hit and sent to the bottom of the North Sea H.M.S. *Nottingham* whilst the light cruiser not merely was zigzagging but doing 20 knots. Nevertheless the German managed to give her two torpedoes.

Then, on this very November 26, Lieutenant-Commander Wilhelm Moraht had left Wilhelmshaven in U-64. A typical square-head German, with a resolute mouth, at that time aged thirty-two, he had been fifteen years in the German Navy, but this was his first year in the submarine service. That he should be commanding such a big boat within eleven months is indicative of the shortage in specialist officers, yet he was destined to become one of the most dangerous among all the Middle Sea experts. During that summer, whilst returning to Emden after one of his cruises, he had experienced the narrowest of escapes. One of our submarines saw his craft, fired a torpedo, which ought to have hit but just missed, struck a shoal and there exploded. The incident badly shook the German crew.

His voyage towards the Mediterranean via the Orkneys and Shetlands ; the foul North Sea weather making life in the conning-tower vile ; with no sights of the clouded sun ; everybody suffering wet and cold ; the heavier gales down the Atlantic, next through the Bay of Biscay, when he dodged waves by submerging and steering blind for forty hours ; all this soon became forgotten as he settled down to weeks of idyllic cruising under blue skies in wine-coloured waters, past lovely coasts. One of his first prizes was the Norwegian S.S. *Tripel*, and such chance meetings just prevented sunny sea-life from being spoilt by monotony. Apart from carrying out duties entrusted to him, the capture of any steamer meant any amount of fresh food instead of tinned meats. Then occasionally there would be a rendezvous with another U-boat, and in fine weather an exchange of visits, swapping yarns and obtaining the latest news. Thus U-64 made eight successful cruises from Cattaro, and three weeks or a month usually elapsed before returning.

Next, on December 3, UC-35 left Kiel and she reached Cattaro on the day after Christmas ; but already U-65 had been operating in the Mediterranean—and had good reason not to forget it. For on December 4, when 125 miles east of Malta, she met with the British S.S. *Caledonia* (9223 tons) and torpedoed her without warning. The steamer's captain tried to end the submarine's career by ramming, and even did so much damage that U-65 must go into the Adriatic for three months' repairs—which again shows that a U-boat may be badly injured yet get home. After *Caledonia* had received her fatal wound, the captain was taken prisoner, and great was the Teutonic anger that he had dared to use his ship's steel forefoot as a means of offence.

The Austrian U-XVI was another submarine which had a curious experience. She was one of those which had been transported in sections by train from Bremen to Pola a year ago, and October 16, 1916, found her working the Gulf of Taranto where she torpedoed the Italian destroyer *Nembo*. But the latter's depth-charges went off and injured U-XVI, so that both opponents went to the bottom. A somewhat similar incident also happened near the White Sea.

Somehow our Q-ships still failed to bring off victories, as we may observe from the bad luck which dogged the 3683 tons *Saros* (alias *Bradford City*). On October 30 she was thirteen miles from Cape San Sebastian (north-west Mediterranean) and sighted a U-boat. The mystery vessel's commanding officer, Lieutenant-Commander R. C. C. Smart, R.N., tried to fool his opponent that the ship was running away. He made a lot of smoke, but actually slowed down, sent his firemen to panic stations, let the enemy behold the crew putting on life-belts, and placing blankets in the boats. Unfortunately the German refused to join in this little game to-day, but insisted on shelling. Smart thus had to reveal his identity by opening fire, and this made the German gunners leave their station to bolt like rabbits down below ; after which the U-boat hurried off out of danger.

Having given herself away, *Saros* must transform her appearance, which she did by moving from this scene, painting out the two white bands on her funnel, hoisting Spanish colours and making towards the coast as if bound into one of Spain's ports. Nothing further happened till November 2, when this decoy after carrying out firing exercises was returning to the Gibraltar-Malta track. At 4.30 p.m. the officer of the watch heard a shot and saw a submarine 7000 yards off, just forward of the starboard beam,

apparently trimmed for cruising on the surface. The German ensign flew at her foremast, as well as a two-flag signal which could not be read in the bad visibility but probably was the usual "M N"—"Stop Immediately."

Although the enemy had not the slightest intention of letting this poor "tramp" escape, the real character of *Saros* still continued unsuspected, and the German sailors were all about the deck watching their gun hurl projectiles. There seemed no hurry, the firing was very deliberate, though one round fell just short of the steamer's bow and another almost alongside the bridge. Several others passed close over the bridge, yet not one actually hit. Presently the rivals settled down to parallel courses, but sunset had come and gone, night approached, and *Saros* must act quickly or not at all.

At last the U-boat was not more than 5400 yards away, and at this range Smart made a beginning with his 4-inch as well as his 12-pounder, which created a sudden liveliness among the German crew. Instead of sitting smoking and criticising the wretched "merchantman," down came German ensign, both masts, and the men darted below. The second shell from *Saros*' 4-inch ricocheted and struck the conning-tower's top, the 12-pounder's second shell hit her aft, and several others were thought to be hits likewise. Then the submarine made a smoke screen and by 4.50 had disappeared.

She had not been vitally damaged, but was like a whale wild with the desire for savage revenge. At 5.15 she fired a torpedo, yet owing to the heavy swell and strong breeze the missile just missed and passed ahead of *Saros*, who now altered course to the southward. Owing to the sea which had risen, and the very bright moon which did not set until midnight, some very anxious hours were spent by the decoy. Unable to do more than  $8\frac{1}{2}$  knots, she was all the time expecting another torpedo would rush forth against the ship's side, and that would be the end. But with the first moments of a new day, and the protection of unrelieved darkness, the danger passed, so *Saros* went back on to the shipping track. Her opponent was the renowned Hersing in U-21, who very nearly succeeded in giving her the same destruction that he had handed H.M.S. *Triumph* and *Majestic* at the Dardanelles.

More merchant ships were being sunk in the Mediterranean than the English Channel, largely because the routes of the former could not be patrolled closely, although every trawler was requisitioned by the Admiralty immediately after being launched.



Not yet had their lordships come round to the idea of convoys, but the probability of their doing so was far less remote than formerly. In December 1916 began the system of "protected sailings" for Scandinavian ships across the North Sea, and from this developed the convoy system by the following April.

At the end of this month Admiral Thursby had seventy-two trawlers in the Aegean, yet that number was far from sufficing, especially as the enemy had begun a mining offensive along that sea. Owing to the shallow depth at which the mines were laid, trawlers were found more suitable than the bigger fleet-sweepers and sloops; but at the shortest notice a trawler might any day find herself strenuously engaged in anti-submarine warfare. On November 20, for example, Trawler No. 298 (Skipper P. W. Page, R.N.R.) when off Mount Athos began a duel with a U-boat that can only be regarded as a moral victory for the fishermen. Although hopelessly outranged, the trawler fought a very gallant action for one hour and twenty-five minutes. Armed with only a 3-pounder, the patrol vessel finally scored a hit which caused the German to break off the action and run away at high speed.

We have already mentioned that the hospital ship *Britannic* foundered in the Zea Channel by mines on November 21; but only two days later another hospital ship, *Braemar Castle*, struck more mines in the Mykoni Channel. They managed to beach her on Blabi rock off Tinos Island, and the sweepers presently found more mines in the spot where *Braemar Castle* had been damaged. She was refloated on November 30 and towed to Tinos harbour where temporary repairs were made. This liner happened to be carrying sick and wounded from Salonika bound for Malta, but all were removed by the two British sloops *Honeysuckle* and *Jonquil* assisted by the French trawler *Marie Rose* with *Venus II*. After being landed at Syra, the patients received every attention from the inhabitants, being subsequently taken to Malta by a more lucky hospital ship.

Whilst the Turks had closed Smyrna by a boat-supported boom across its entrance, M.L.'s were doing good work among the neighbouring islands (some of the latter certainly communicating with submarines); but the lack of wireless in these British craft was made up by the military authorities lending each M.L. six carrier pigeons. From north to south, and east to west, the Aegean afforded endless work to every kind of vessel. Divided into so many areas, each having its own Senior Naval Officer with his squadron, it has been likened to a number of satrapies.

under the rule of separate rajahs, but all owing allegiance to the Vice-Admiral of the East Mediterranean. Thus there was one rule of the squadron watching the coast of Crete and Anatolia between Fourni Islands and Rhodes ; another being that of the detached squadron off the Dardanelles ; a third in the Salonika area ; a fourth looking after the Smyrna-Khios-Samos district ; a fifth responsible for the Mykoni-Salonika transport route as well as the eastern coast of Greece ; whilst a sixth operated off the Bulgarian coast.

Many a fine yarn could be written of the aerial incidents which occurred in some of these districts, but we have space here to mention only a few. Take, for instance, October 25 when five aeroplanes were sent from Imbros bound into Roumania. All went well till they approached the Roumanian frontier, when thick mist and thunderstorms made things difficult. Four 'planes reached Bucharest safely, but the fifth developed some slight engine trouble and the pilot descended to make repairs—only to find he was in Bulgarian territory, and close to one of the enemy's camps.

The minutes ticked by, a race commenced between the necessary repairs and the Bulgars' arrival : it was about a fifty-fifty chance whether the pilot might escape capture. Eventually he was just able to finish his job, restart the engine, and take the air. But then more trouble followed, and after crossing the Danube he ran into fog with rain, which made him lose his bearings entirely. Finally he landed in Russia, whence he came back to Bucharest by train.

Amid all this varied and ceaseless activity in the air, on and under the sea, we find daring and ingenuity side by side. Captain C. G. Chichester, R.N., who commanded the light cruiser *Forward* from the autumn of 1915 till the summer of 1918, spending most of his time escorting and patrolling (except for a few months as senior officer of a detached squadron based on Mitylene), has given me some details as to how the task of getting valuable intelligence was carried out. The landing and—after an interval—the fetching of our secret agents became of the utmost importance but also a fine art. For this dangerous adventure a few trustworthy Anatolian refugees were selected from those who at outbreak of war had migrated from Asia Minor to Mitylene, among other Aegean islands.

As the months sped by, it was very necessary for us to know the state of affairs in Turkey and its empire with regard to matters generally, but specially concerning naval and military items.

Therefore these Anatolians were organised under Mitylene's British Consul, the routine being for three or four of them to be taken towards the mainland in M.L.'s by night. The secret landing place was some twenty miles south of Smyrna, and having arrived off the beach the men were rowed in by the motor launches' dinghies.

The agents then disappeared for ten to fourteen days and sometimes longer. During this period they somehow made contact with similar spies from Constantinople, obtaining "very reliable information" via Smyrna, and at length, on an appointed day, by a certain agreed hour, they would be brought afloat again by the M.L.'s back to Mitylene. The written information obtained was secreted on the person by many ingenious methods, and their only weapon consisted of that usually carried by any other Anatolian peasant—a sharp, curved, dagger which slipped into a large and highly embroidered leather waist-belt. Very decidedly these fellows risked death every time they set out on such uncertain expeditions, but they knew how to look after themselves, even if the Turco-Germans were active enough with their counter-espionage; and Captain Chichester has given me the following episode.

"I remember once the M.L. coming alongside *Forward* after the motor launch had returned from bringing off two or three of these ruffianly looking men with their splendid physique. On telling my interpreter to ask one of the agents how he had got on, the latter grinningly replied not in words but by holding up two fingers of his right hand. Then, moving his forefinger swiftly across the throat two or three times, he clearly indicated that his adventure had resulted in killing a couple of enemies in that manner. Since the Anatolians are of Greek extraction, and have no liking for the Turks, this man had much enjoyed making short work of two who had suspected him.

"I think it speaks well for the commanding officers of motor launches engaged in this work—most of them being amateur yachtsmen—that they never failed in locating the secret landing-place, even on the darkest night; but, of course, during those years some of our agents never returned. The French (during the time I was Senior Naval Officer of the 6th Detached Squadron, based on Mitylene) tried to duplicate this secret service, and I am thankful the effort was nipped in the bud by the smartness of my Port Control Officer at Samos. He found that the French Military authorities had (without telling me) embarked a gang of

cut-throats aboard a trawler that I had lent for conveyance of foodstuffs to some French nuns at Samos. The agents selected in this case were nearly all on our 'suspect' list."

And so one could continue. Farther north, Commander A. B. W. Higginson, R.N., in charge of the twenty-five ketches at Kephalo, used regularly to effect the landing and embarkation of spies who visited the Gallipoli peninsular, which was another fine piece of valuable work appealing to a certain type of courageous people. But so many were the minor happenings; the cool, brave deeds by officers and men from all sorts and sizes of patrol vessels; that these pages could be filled with nothing else. In spite of those long centuries of Aegean romance through the generations when all warships were oared galleys, there had come to the archipelago such a collection of wonder-rousing happenings as would have provided Homer with fullest inspiration.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### RAIDING THE DRIFTER LINE

LOOKING back on the war era, it seems remarkable that underwater craft coming all the way from Germany should be able to lay their mine-fields in so many spots without being prevented or even detected. That was one result from ultra-modern invention, yet it contrasts curiously with our pre-war attitude of indifference to mines as being obsolete. For during the year 1916 alone the enemy's submarines deposited their mines off such Italian and French ports as Genoa, Taranto, Marseilles, Brindisi, Gallipoli (Gulf of Taranto), Valona, Venice, Corfu, Bizerta, Oran ; as well as in the Aegean off Mudros, Crete (Suda Bay and Candia), Milo, the Piraeus, Zea, and Mykoni channels, Salonika ; to say nothing of Port Said, Alexandria, and Malta.

This represented a pretty inclusive area of the Mediterranean theatre, and well indicating the utter impossibility of supplying enough sweepers to cover the whole vast coast. And the losses which must inevitably follow, as for example when H.M. Sloop *Nasturtium* was knocked out whilst sweeping off Mudros, made it scarcely likely that we could ever get within proximity of the numbers desired for routine duty. When the paddlers were seen churning the waters off Malta and Alexandria, it was just about time to believe the Admiralty had sent out every suitable vessel on which they could lay their powerful hands. All the trawlers were of course steel built ; and those drifters, which came home, were so badly holed by the Mediterranean worm that steel drifters must be sent out instead.

We saw some time back that the German UC-12 after laying mines off Taranto in March blew up, but was taken in hand by the Italians and salvaged. Now on December 9, her repairs having been completed, she was again launched and then commissioned as X-1. That meant for Italy a day of rejoicing : never again would this boat lay traps as her opposite number UC-14 still continued to do ; one of the latter's favourite spots being off Valona, into which mine-field the *Citta di Palermo* once

blundered. But happiness is a condition more or less limited, and most impermanent during war. Only two days after the re-launching of X-1 the Italian battleship *Regina Margherita* (13,214 tons) plunged her country into gloom and herself beneath the waves: off Valona she hit another mine-field by night, and thus perished nearly 700 officers and men. It is not without interest to observe that, shortly afterwards, UC-14 (which had once come by train from Germany to Pola) was withdrawn from the Adriatic, again transported by railway, and so went north to Bruges, where she joined the Flanders flotilla. When we consider that this boat had performed most effective work for her country in the Adriatic and gone so far east as Constantinople, it is worth bearing in mind that in any future Mediterranean war submarines may be sent south more freely from the North Sea. Although Germany had no port of her own along the Latin Lake, and her two surface ships had not since the summer of 1914 dared to emerge westward of the Dardanelles, she nevertheless managed to carry on a devastating campaign against our Middle Sea shipping. The consideration of land communications in regard to naval hostilities thus takes on a special value.

But these Adriatic submarines by their navigational conservatism still courted death. Over and over again the reader will have noticed how U-boat captains persisted in keeping a midway course through the Otranto Straits, so that the area wherein *Restore* sank during October 12, 1915, became standardised as well deserving of vigilance. About 2.30 p.m. of December 17, 1916, the drifters *Fisher Girl*, *Guerdon*, and *D.H.S.* were lying<sup>1</sup> to their nets south of this spot, where the depth is over 500 fathoms (3000 feet), and they were using nets 180 feet deep. A strong southerly wind was kicking up a rough sea, when suddenly Skipper H. Sage of *Fisher Girl* realised that a submarine had fouled his nets, so he blew the ship's steam whistle and the *Guerdon* (Skipper W. Sutton) came alongside; but the weight made it impossible for nets to be hauled any farther, and they were slacked slightly so that a depth-charge could be dropped. One hour later *D.H.S.* exploded another.

Just after 6 p.m. the weather had developed into a moderate gale, and the U-boat had shifted her position till she was alongside *Fisher Girl*, so a third depth-charge and some lance-bombs were let go. The wind was making a wild noise, the drifters plunged to the seas, the night seemed very dark, and it was rain-

<sup>1</sup> Actually in Lat. 40° 9' N., Long. 19° E.

ing. But they hung on till the sun rose, when the tow-rope was like a bar of iron. Further attempts defeated their intentions, for now something had to give, the wires parted, and the submarine escaped. At one time it was thought that she had been destroyed on that occasion, and we supposed that no submarine could endure the bursting of 120 pounds of T.N.T. Admittedly the enemy endured more than sixteen hours of agonising suspense, and suffered damage by the explosions: yet the very breaking of drifters' taut wires brought her deliverance. This was the Austrian U-XX, which had been commissioned but four months ago after construction at Pola, and the drifters' wires had supported a weight of 210 tons. Such an experience so early in her career must have shaken up the Austrian crew in more senses than one; she was doomed to be unlucky, and the Italians sank her in 1918.

A notable sequel to December 17 occurred five days later, and a date was selected with purpose. It was intended that a raid be made (a) to avenge the damage and peril which the drifters had inflicted on U-XX; (b) but also to prepare a clearance for UC-35 which had left Kiel on December 3 and was due at Cattaro on the 26th. To undertake a couple of raids would be too risky, wherefore one was to be made half-way between the date of the Austrian submarine's escape (18th) and the coming of the German. A third excellent reason made the 22nd most suitable, since 30,000 French troops for Salonika were due to begin leaving Taranto by transports on the 24th: it would be very helpful for the submarines if the drifter line could be swept aside in good time to permit these steamers being attacked.

The story, with all its coincidences and strange twists, deserves to be told in full, and for the first time the details are here presented.

About 9.30 p.m. of this December 22 an Austrian force, consisting of one light cruiser and four destroyers, swooped down from the north and started shelling the line where *Gowan Lea*<sup>1</sup> and *Our Allies* became the targets. The remarkable thing is that whilst *Gowan Lea* received several hits and considerable damage, there were no casualties: yet a different tale might have been told had it not chanced that within a few minutes the enemy were sighted by six French destroyers. The latter were in Lat. 40° 5' N., Long. 18° 55' E., or practically the very position

<sup>1</sup> This was an Aberdeen drifter commanded by Skipper Joseph Watt, who a few months later was destined to win everlasting fame for his vessel, and the V.C. for himself. See Chapter XXX.

where *Fisher Girl* and her two mates had trapped U-XX. These destroyers were not on patrol, but merely happened to be on passage from Brindisi to Taranto, and the arrival could never have been better timed.

The Austrians turned to go back home, pursued by two of the fastest French, viz. *Casque* and *Boulefeu*, whilst the other four somehow got scattered. *Casque* soon worked up to 28 knots, with several more knots available if absolutely necessary for a short spurt. This nocturnal winter's chase, rushing over the water at nearly 32 land miles an hour, suggests one of the most thrilling experiences, and she easily overtook an Austrian destroyer. The latter loosed off a torpedo, which *Casque* narrowly avoided, but almost immediately afterwards *Casque* was hit by a shell in her boiler-room, which brought the speed down from 28 to 22 knots.

Meanwhile the French had wirelessly to Brindisi at 9.45 p.m. announcing that the Austrians were out; at 11.30 p.m. three Italian destroyers therefore put to sea, followed two hours later by H.M.S. *Gloucester* with a couple of destroyers, whilst the Italian flotilla-leader *Mirabello* and two more destroyers left harbour at 3.30 a.m. Since Brindisi was situated so conveniently, flanking the course between Otranto Straits and the Dalmatian coast, there should be no difficulty in the Italians making contact with the French to-night. But no one ever expected this to be done so literally.

In spite of her wound, *Casque* kept on with the chase, and shortly afterwards two Italian destroyers joined up. One of these was the *Abba*, and with real Latin *élan* she was steaming at her utmost speed—31 knots—when she crashed into the port quarter of *Casque*, the angle being 45 degrees. From now onwards the gallant chase suddenly was transformed into a series of ludicrous situations that seem scarcely credible. Luckily the Frenchman had her torpedo-tubes trained out at exactly the angle by which the Italian approached, so that instead of *Casque* being holed and sent to the bottom, she was saved by the *Abba*'s stem cutting into one tube for a depth of several feet and so accurately as a knife divides tallow. A torpedo was in the tube, yet it never exploded, though the impulse charge in the rear did. Whilst the strange fend-off had done its miraculous salvation, *Casque*'s hull had been badly distorted and she started leaking.

The next discovery was that, consequent on the impact, *Abba*'s bower cable got adrift and most annoyingly wound itself round two of the Frenchman's propellers, ruining them and their



shafts hopelessly. Now the *Casque's* wireless office was situated on the opposite side, and in it the operator sat with his ear-phones, the door being closed. Such was the *Abba's* violence that both operator and door were hurled into the dark sea, where he was almost run down by an Austrian destroyer before being rescued by a friendly one. As if this chapter of accidents were not enough, another was due to follow. *Abba* remained afloat though her bows had been wrecked, and she went astern so as to get clear. Believe it or not, this was the precise moment when the *Boutefeu* at 27 knots came charging through the blackness and smashed into *Abba* almost at right angles, the selected point being just forward of the Italian's bridge, and the gash extending for three-quarters of her width. Curiously, *Boutefeu* did very little damage to her own bows, and the night ended with all ships reaching their respective homes. By 2 a.m. the Austrians had a free run into safety, having one man killed and two wounded. *Abba* lost one man through jumping overboard, but they managed to tow her stern first into Brindisi, and the end came to an imperfect night. Neither British nor Austrian, nor French or Italian, vessels had benefited. A very useless occasion to everybody concerned! For the drifters still carried on with their job, and the M.L.'s continued to work from 5 to 8 miles north and south of the line, hoping to cause a submarine to dive before sighting the nets.

But this month the M.L.'s were to suffer disappointment. There went out an order from the Admiralty that their 13-pounders must be exchanged for 3-pounders, since the heavier guns were required for arming merchant steamers. Such a decision emphasised the absolute necessity for giving transports, cargo-carriers, and the restricted passenger-ships all the defence possible: at the present rate of sinkings the British armies would soon be unable to receive supplies and the nation unable to get their essential food. On the other hand, did not the instruction exhibit some confused thinking? So far as the Mediterranean area was concerned, the first and most insistent duty was to close the two Straits of Gibraltar and Otranto tightly. If that were accomplished, then steamers passing through the Middle Sea would need no guns and patrols would be superfluous. Something must be said, for the plea made many times during those anxious months that we could have employed the hundreds of trawlers, drifters, M.L.'s, and other small craft more collectively—therefore more effectively.

In the Adriatic these had become so numerous that Commodore Heneage was appointed thither from the Aegean, and he reached Taranto on December 19 in the yacht *Catania*. Using Gallipoli harbour for his base, the Commodore was conveniently situated for directly looking after the Otranto Barrage and M.L.'s. Whilst Admiral Kerr still flew his flag in H.M.S. *Queen*, the other British battleships were now being sent back to England. We saw them in the early summer of 1915 arriving from the Dardanelles for support of the Italians, but their crews were so badly needed for new destroyers in the Narrow Seas that this old-fashioned battle squadron must needs be dispersed. A farewell dinner was given by the British Admiral to his captains on February 15 (1917), the departure made next day, and the *Queen* then became a floating base for the net barrage. Another change occurred when the Duke of the Abruzzi was relieved in February as Commander-in-Chief by Admiral Conte di Revel. But already on December 29 Sir John Jellicoe had succeeded Sir Henry Jackson as First Sea Lord at the Admiralty. Two days previously another disaster closed the Mediterranean year of 1916.

We observed some time back that during this period the six German submarines UB-42-47 had been launched at Pola. Now UB-47 was commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Steinbauer, one of those serious young officers with a keen sense of responsibility, clever, plucky, but emotionally cold and hard. One who knew him informed me that Steinbauer was boastful and merciless. At any rate the latter always made a complete fulfilment of his duty, however harsh that might be. On December 27 he had brought UB-47 to that busy southern area of the Aegean which so frequently yielded targets, and now he was 30 miles east of Cerigo<sup>1</sup> when the two-funnelled French battleship *Gaulois* (11,260 tons) was sighted approaching. Built in 1896 (i.e. eight years before the commissioning of H.M.S. *Queen*), the Frenchman was drawing 28 feet, carrying about 630 officers and men. To-day she came on her way from Corfu bound to Salonika, escorted by a French destroyer and two of her country's trawlers. In spite of this screen, Steinbauer managed to torpedo the battleship which went down. Here occurred no panic, but when it was realised that she could not be saved the crew were taken off in an orderly manner by the three other vessels, the only losses being four men who had been killed by the explosion. Still frequenting the same district, the German torpedoed on New

<sup>1</sup> The exact position was Lat. 36° 30' N., Long. 23° 45' E.

Year's Day the Cunarder *Ivernia* (14,278 tons) 58 miles south-east of Cape Matapan. This well-known Atlantic liner was carrying troops to Alexandria, and she lost thirty-six men. Steinbauer remained in command of UB-47 till May 1917 when she was presented to the Austrians and he went home to take over UB-48 which was an improved type ; but August provided him with more opportunities whilst bringing this new boat from Germany to Cattaro.

Somehow one feels that *Gaulois* deserved a better fate, because she had long since been given battle scars and narrowly escaped death. On that memorable March 18, 1915, when the historic attack was made by the combined fleet against the Dardanelles—one of those crises of the world's history—she had come out of the Straits so seriously damaged that they had to beach her to avoid foundering. Then, after temporary repairs, she steamed to Malta where the dockyard made a fine job, building an extra hull or caisson for part of her hull. When the torpedo struck her on December 27, 1916, these caissons constructed along her sides helped her to remain afloat, practically upright, for more than half an hour. Even in the act of sinking she had a list to starboard of only three degrees. But the great lesson to be learnt from her loss is that an escort should stick to her job, and keep zig-zagging ahead, so as to put the submarine captain on the defensive and off his stroke. Unfortunately *Gaulois'* destroyer had just dropped back to pick up a message which the battleship had let fall, and this interval was quite long enough for the alert Steinbauer to do his worst.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### SINKING THE BATTLESHIPS

**A**S if the Mediterranean were too restricted, Max Valentiner in U-38 had temporarily forsaken that sea, passed out through Gibraltar Straits, and actually reached Madeira, where on December 3 he torpedoed the French gunboat *Surprise*. Unexpected this assault certainly was, but two other vessels were sunk likewise, and these facile fatal attacks on men-of-war were most disquieting. Whose turn would come next?

True, there had been recently established the anti-submarine department at the Admiralty, but some time must elapse before any good results could show themselves; and meanwhile our Merchant Navy was being killed off. No one better than Sir John Jellicoe appreciated the gravity of the outlook. Writing at the beginning of 1917, he remarked privately to Sir Cecil Thursby: "The question of the day is mercantile tonnage, and the destruction of submarines. Unless we can save our losses considerably we shall soon be in a hole." The First Sea Lord added that the monthly losses of Allied and British shipping at that time averaged 300,000 tons, but we were not producing 100,000 monthly tons to make up for this. As to escorts, he could send no more to the Mediterranean. Our primary duty was to sink submarines, and if our vessels were engaged escorting, then they were not destroying the enemy.

And all these trawlers, drifters, together with the other auxiliary craft sent south in answer to requests, had seriously weakened the essential forces around the British Isles. "In home waters," Admiral Jellicoe again wrote privately to Admiral Thursby at the end of February of this new year, "we have only about half the number of patrol ships which I consider necessary, and it is obvious therefore that we cannot spare any for the Mediterranean. The truth of the matter is that our resources in regard to the Navy are strained beyond the limit, and that we are carrying on the war on too wide a front." Not only were the Taranto battle-ships being recalled, but likewise those from the Aegean, with the exception of *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon*. This had been decided

upon at an Allied Naval Conference held in Rome during January. Two French battleships of the *Patrie* were being sent to the Aegean to make up for our withdrawals.

There can be no question of the First Sea Lord, with his foresight and clear vision, being exactly right. The naval war had a front far too wide, and he was desirous that the British Army might be withdrawn from Salonika, thereby shortening our lines of communication and setting free those merchant ships which had become so precious. Each Army Division needed for its maintenance about thirteen steamers, which in turn required a lane of patrols through the Mediterranean zones. Thus before War Cabinets and politicians are ever again permitted to start so many overseas minor hostilities, they should at least bear in mind that only by ships can these brigades be transported, protected, kept going with supplies and food. Imagine how heavily we should have been embarrassed if by a combination of German and Boer influences we had been plunged into a South African side-show, with many more thousands of shipping tons locked up for weeks, and Max Valentiner's friends lengthening the danger routes!

Even as things presented themselves in January 1917, the future looked none too good around the Aegean and southern Adriatic. If by any duplicity the Hellenes should join the Central Powers, then the Germans after subjugating Roumania might come down against Monastir, occupy Greece, drive the Salonika Army back into the transports, begin a campaign against the Italian Army at Valona, with all sorts of developments. At any rate there would be notable repercussions on British naval forces in both the Aegean and Adriatic, but the submarines meanwhile could have their ideal opportunities against an unending procession of loaded steamers. Amid all this long crisis it could not be expected that *Goeben* and *Breslau* might remain at the Bosphorus.

Apart from these conjectures were facts: blunt, poignant, significant facts. They were astonishingly real and patent, illustrative of the torpedo's deadliness. On January 4 the Russian battleship *Peresviet* struck a mine-field off Port Said and foundered, but five days later came a much worse tragedy. Strange though it may read, this might never have happened but for the Battle of the Falklands. It will be recollected that by the end of December 8, 1914, when von Spee's squadron was defeated and the *Dresden* alone escaped, she managed to hide herself for three

months, but on March 14 was sunk at Juan Fernandez Island, a Chilean possession in the Pacific<sup>1</sup> after the arrival of H.M.S. *Kent*, *Glasgow*, and *Orama*. The survivors were subsequently taken across to South America in a Chilean warship and interned on the island of Quiriquina, just north of Talcahuana harbour, about 240 land miles south of Valparaiso.<sup>2</sup> Now among the many who escaped from this lax captivity was Lieutenant Kurt Hartwig, one of those stalwart young officers who might best be described as of the heavy-fisted, muscular type.

Hartwig was a glutton for adventure, but a real patriot. To have been present at the Battles of Coronel and Falklands; to have lived three thrilling months playing hide-and-seek in the Magellan Straits region; to have seen his ship sunk; and finally to have made his way back from South America to Germany in spite of our blockade is a pretty fine record for twelve months. Early in 1916 he entered the submarine service, and shortly before that year ended brought U-32 south into the Mediterranean, where he had not long to wait for the success of his life.

On January 6 of the new year the only British battleships remaining in the Aegean were *Lord Nelson*, *Exmouth*, *Implacable*, *Agamemnon*, and *Cornwallis*. The latter was of 14,000 tons and a speed of 19 knots. Twelve years old, she had done excellent work during the Dardanelles campaign, and actually fired the first shot on the initial day when the outer forts were bombarded. She was always kept in exceptional efficiency, and her commanding officer, Captain A. P. Davidson, D.S.O., R.N., was unusually able. But now the time had arrived when she must leave for England in accordance with the Admiralty's plan already noted; and on the way she was to call at Malta, being there due on January 9.

On the previous day Captain Davidson received warning by wireless that a submarine lay ahead of him, but concluded that the enemy would not be in the same position for the intervening hours. Two sloops and eight trawlers hunted for the U-boat in vain, but it so happened that when *Cornwallis* reached Lat. 35° 11' N., Long. 15° 29' E., or about 60 miles short of Malta, there she remained, well knowing the position likely to afford a

<sup>1</sup> The full story of *Dresden* and how she hid herself will be found in my book *The Sea Raiders*.

<sup>2</sup> I am informed by Mr. J. R. Woodward, who resided in Chile from 1912 to 1932, and lived at Valparaiso from 1912 to 1919, that "the internment was so farcical that at the end of the war few, if any, prisoners remained on the island; they were allowed to take jobs on the mainland, and I believe many actually found their way back to Germany long before 1918."

target. Now this submarine was Hartwig's U-32 ; it was a fine morning, and in the distance he had no difficulty to recognise the two funnels and masts, the signal yards and guns, the old-fashioned bridge, of a grey-hull battleship approaching. An escorting destroyer could likewise be seen. Getting into position, Hartwig waited his opportunity, and shortly before 7.55 a.m. fired a torpedo which struck the starboard side of *Cornwallis* abreast of the after boiler-room, and this was the first intimation that the enemy was still hereabouts.

The escort—H.M.S. *Beagle*, which had also played no undistinguished part during the Gallipoli operations—dashed to the spot and dropped depth-charges though without any luck. Immediately the stricken battleship took a 10 degrees list to starboard, which made it difficult to hoist out the boats, so her port wing compartments and engine-room had to be flooded before bringing her on an even keel. The water was now up to the net-shelves, and, no steam being available, boats were hoisted out by hand. With admirable discipline and cool celerity everything was ready for abandoning ship when Captain Davidson called *Beagle* alongside. The latter had been circling round and keeping the unseen enemy down till the boats were out.

Thinking that the submarine had now gone away, *Cornwallis'* commanding officer decided to transfer his 670 officers and men to the destroyer, and luckily this was done quickly, the only people remaining on board being the Captain, his navigator, and the galley's crew. Barely had *Beagle* shoved off than a periscope peeped up, and a torpedo hit the battleship's port side amidships. That was just where the destroyer had been lying, so that a double disaster, with heavy losses, would have followed but for the former's smartness. The sea began to make, it had been ticklish seamanship taking the destroyer alongside the awkward net-shelf, already awash. Then the poor old *Cornwallis* slowly settled down beneath the waves after *Beagle* in vain had rushed at the periscope and again let go a depth-charge. It was all over now, the remaining party and Captain Davidson were taken on board, only fifteen of his people (who were in the after boiler-room) perishing.

Thus Hartwig avenged the loss of *Dresden* and von Spee's other ships : nothing but first-class discipline and smart work prevented him from sending 700 people from two vessels to the same doom. One result of the *Cornwallis* and *Ivernia* disasters was that Admiral Ballard henceforth gave all transports a double, rather

than a single, escort. One destroyer, or one sloop, could not be thought adequate for saving life. As things turned out, this *Cornwallis* episode might have been worse : the ship would have floated for several hours if only one torpedo had struck, and she had a slender chance of being brought into Malta. But the dockyard people were being overworked with too many refits already, and the obsolete battleship could be spared. Luckily the *Cornwallis* personnel would still be of service to the Admiralty for manning the new units.

The problem of Mediterranean escorts had now become acute, and it was practicable to guard only the more important ships. Destroyers were breaking down through overwork in escorting fast ships, and this in turn hung up the departure of transports : yet just at this period, when we were short of such craft, the enemy badly needed more submarines. Why ? Because of two reasons : (1) Germany's Unrestricted Campaign was inaugurated on February 1 of this year, and she had not possessed the prescience to start a building programme the previous August ; (2) the British Convoy System would presently be so effective as to reduce the opportunities for attack. In brief, we have it on the authority of the German expert Captain Gayer that by September 1917 there were only 132 U-boats ready for North Sea, Flanders, Atlantic, and Mediterranean. After allowing for time spent on passage, several weeks spent in refit, losses by various causes and delays by breakdowns, the numbers actually at work on any station on a given date were not too many.

Nevertheless, any lack in respect of quantity was made up by the energy and ubiquity, the vehemence and surprise which the German aces sprang upon the Allies ; as, for example, when the French troopship, *Amiral Magon* (5566 tons), carrying 900 troops for Salonika was torpedoed and sent to the bottom in ten minutes on January 25, 1917. But even the most experienced commanding officers were apt to make errors of judgment, with unfortunate results. Just as the German Government by a long series of frightfulness and stupid policy so offended the United States that the latter severed diplomatic relationship on February 3—two days after our enemy had declared the Unrestricted Submarine Campaign—so that able Mediterranean pioneer Lieutenant-Commander Hersing perpetrated a terrible mistake.

He had done splendidly for his country down south, but was needed at home, and at the beginning of February 1917 started back home in U-21. All went well till he met a Dutch convoy of



eight steamers off the Scillies on the 22nd. The *Jacatra*, *Gaasterland*, *Noorderdijk*, *Bandoeng*, *Eemland*, *Ambon*, *Zaandijk*, and *Menado* had just left Falmouth and on the same evening at 5.45 were about 25 miles west of Bishop's Rock. To Hersing these vessels seemed the most perfect gift just as he was entering the English Channel, and he promptly sank six of them ! In response to the wireless calls from *Bandoeng*, three of H.M. Tugs<sup>1</sup> hurried out from Falmouth, who were able to save *Ambon* and *Menado*, assisted by the decoy *Tamarisk* (Q-11) and trawlers. No fewer than 200 shipless men were landed at Penzance.

Naturally the disaster angered the Netherlands, especially as Germany had given this convoy a safe-conduct. Unfortunately Hersing was not aware of that concession, and his arrival home at Wilhelmshaven on March 3 after such a brilliant chapter in Mediterranean waters created an anti-climax. Finally, after protracted negotiations, Germany agreed to compensate Holland by transferring to the latter six German steamers then lying in the Dutch East Indies, but the incident showed that someone in the German Admiralty had failed to ensure that important instructions reached Hersing. Not that this regrettable affair harmed the latter professionally. In the North Sea and Atlantic he was to distinguish himself, pressing the anti-commerce campaign against us, but our Convoy System gave him the most difficult task in all his career and very nearly lost him his life.

In the Otranto Straits the new M.L.'s which kept arriving in fours on board some collier's deck ; and the steel-built drifters that had been sent out from England to replace those which came back to Poole with their underwater planking so badly holed<sup>2</sup> by worm ; helped to make the barrage less ineffective. During February and March no fewer than 24 skippers and 177 ratings who had served two years in the Mediterranean came back to England with all sorts of wondrous tales for narration. It is remarkable that, although the submarine campaign was approaching its peak, not one of these auxiliary vessels underwent attack either going or coming. By the middle of February the Otranto patrol had become somewhat formidable with fourteen divisions of drifters—each division numbering about seven units—available. From 3 p.m. till daylight there would be eight divisions across

<sup>1</sup> They belonged to the Rescue Service inaugurated during January 1917 for assisting into port any mined or torpedoed ships. Between now and Armistice this Admiralty flotilla, scattered about at home and abroad, numbered 77, and they saved 126 injured ships.

<sup>2</sup> Especially on the water-line and immediately below.

the Straits ; from daylight till 3 p.m. seven divisions only were needed. Daily at 3 p.m. one division left Taranto for the line (the passage taking on the average twenty-four hours) ; whilst at daylight one division left the line for Taranto. The other boats were in Taranto coaling, refitting, repairing nets.

The routine for the M.L.'s was this : they were at present based on Gallipoli and (weather permitting) left there at dawn in order to patrol five miles off the coast between Tricase and Otranto, returning to Gallipoli by dark. Tricase was not yet ready, the intention being for half the M.L.'s to use that little harbour shortly. At this mid-February nets were shot east and west on the parallel of  $39^{\circ} 52' N.$  between Long.  $18^{\circ} 36'$  and  $19^{\circ} 6' E.$  : in other words the line had been brought further south and concentrated in the centre of the Straits, leaving a space of ten miles between the line's western end and the Italian coast, whilst about twenty miles separated the barrage's eastern end from Fano Island. I would ask the reader to bear this in mind for reasons that will soon be obvious.

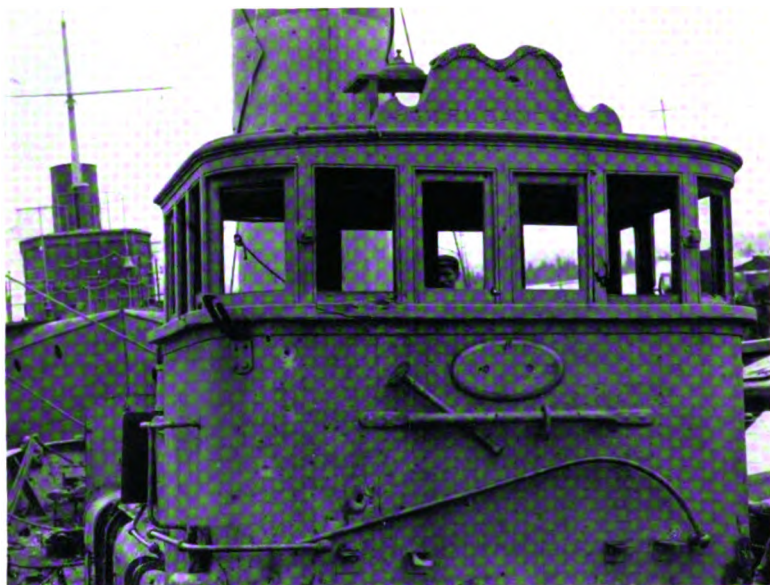
By the first week in March the Adriatic position was that whilst H.M.S. *Queen* had been turned into a drifter-depot, and no British battleships either remained, or were required, at Taranto ; Brindisi harboured the five British light cruisers *Topaze*, *Liverpool*, *Dartmouth*, *Bristol*, *Gloucester* ; Venice contained the two monitors *Earl of Peterborough* and *Sir Thomas Picton*, together with three of our H-class submarines. But badly needed was an anti-submarine air patrol for the Straits. Commodore Sueter and staff came to confer with Rear-Admiral Kerr, and on April 15 the first R.N.A.S. ratings reached Otranto to prepare a seaplane base, so that a fortnight later the air patrol had been inaugurated. It was not a bit too soon.

Meanwhile the Mediterranean sinkings were most distressing, and even if a steamer did escape she often had a rough time : the British S.S. *Bellorado* (4649 tons), for instance, when shelled by a submarine on February 27 got away only after her master, chief officer, and man-at-the-wheel had been killed. On this very date the Submarine Menace Course was started in England for instructing Mercantile officers how to deal with the enemy, and very useful these lectures were to become : yet it would be a long time ere practical results could prove the value. On March 1 the British S.S. *Euterpe* (3540 tons), in that favourite spot to the south of Crete's western end, just managed to avoid destruction but only by the narrowest margin. In the morning



#### TRICASE

The small Italian harbour, where the British motor launches were for some time based when patrolling the Otranto Straits.



#### RAID ON THE DRIFTERS IN THE OTRANTO STRAITS (MAY 15, 1917)

The upper illustration shows the splintered wheelhouse of the *Floandi* after the Austrian raiders had shelled her, and Skipper D. J. Nicholls had refused to surrender. The lower photograph shows the damaged *Gowan Lea* after the same occasion. Skipper J. Watt for his gallantry aboard her was awarded the Victoria Cross.

a torpedo struck her and the explosion unshipped her oil lamps in the cabins below the fore bridge, so that the whole of this part in the ship was burnt out. Assistance met her ; she arrived next day at Suda Bay (Crete) and here they had to beach her and make the necessary repairs ; but the materials had to be sent all the way from Malta.

Once again the Q-ship *Wonganella*—this time whilst on her way from Malta to England via Gibraltar—realised how immensely hard was the task of defeating these southern submarines. The date was March 11, and the time 9.30 a.m., when a U-boat 7000 yards off the port beam opened fire. Although Lieutenant-Commander Guy pretended to run away, and kept slowing down, the wily enemy would come no nearer than 3000 yards and kept on shelling even as the “panic party” was lowering two boats ; one projectile wounded an officer and several men ; another penetrating the bulwarks, wounding more men, bursting the winch’s steam pipe, so that the derrick could not hoist out the third boat. Other shells burst in the well-deck and put the fourth boat out of action. “Abandon ship” thus became impracticable, and *Wonganella* had no alternative but to disclose her identity and open fire.

At that moment was the climax.

The White Ensign whilst being hoisted had its halyards shot away, so the flag must be carried up to the rigging and there secured. The din was indescribable. Amid the bursting of shells, the cries of wounded men, the hissing of steam from the burst pipe, no order could be heard beyond a couple of feet. But *Wonganella*’s fire frightened the U-boat into submergence, and in annoyance she aimed a torpedo which the Q-ship captain just avoided by going astern : only ten feet marked the difference between hit and miss. After that, the German stayed no longer, but he had made rather a mess of the steamer, who at dusk fell in with H.M. Yacht *Iolanda*. The latter sent on board a doctor who saved several of the men from death. It was two days later when the battered decoy with her nine wounded steamed into Gibraltar, holed on the waterline and seriously scarred elsewhere.

Eighteen days subsequent to this duel the Q-ship *Saros* also suffered disappointing luck when she fought an engagement with a submarine off Italy’s west coast. What with the heavy sea, and misfires of her 4-inch gun, she did not succeed in hitting the submarine, but was herself holed just above the waterline. No casualties occurred, she went back to Malta for repairs, resuming

her cruising, and on August 16 at 11 p.m. we find her about 8 miles from that popular Italian resort San Remo. Out of the summer night rushed a torpedo, and down she went, the whole crew being brought into port by a French trawler. Thus more than a year's Mediterranean cruising had produced nothing but labour in vain.

Whilst merchantmen could scarcely survive, and decoys could not conquer, neither could battleships. We have noted the losses of those older British and French *Russell*, *Cornwallis*, *Suffren*, *Gaulois*; but now we have to see how a bigger, faster, and more modern capital ship behaved.

On March 19, 1917, the French 18,027 tons *Danton* (20 knots) which was built six years before and had just concluded a four months' refit, was on her way from Toulon bound for Corfu escorted by the destroyer *Massue* of her own navy. At noon she was zig-zagging and passing a position 30 miles south-west of Sardinia, when Lieutenant-Commander Moraht in U-64 lay there in wait. The *Danton*, with her strange five funnels was, of course, unmistakable and made a unique target on the horizon, so that Moraht quite easily hit her with two torpedoes. The *Massue* hurried to the spot and dropped depth-charges on the submarine without success, for the enemy had dived. Not immediately, but only after three-quarters of an hour, the *Danton* also disappeared below the surface, yet 296 people (including her captain) were drowned. The *Massue*, and two French trawlers which went to the rescue, picked up 806 survivors. The *chalutiers* were there rather by chance, and even the French naval officers in other parts of the Mediterranean severely criticised *Danton* for having crossed that zone in daylight, especially with only a single escort: the problem of which was best—patrol, or escort—still had not been yet settled. Only the routing of ships, and of each ship on a separate track, could completely fool the submarine commanders; who have since confessed that when at last that was adopted, U-boats cruised for days without sighting one vessel.

Thus, on this March afternoon, Moraht not merely saw in a likely area what must be a particular French unit, but he looked her up in the identification book, then confirmed her name on rising to the surface and picking up out of the water a floating box containing letters belonging to *Danton*.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE DRIFTER DISASTER

**T**HE enemy's Mediterranean mine strategy was to lay these perils in small groups off headlands and harbour approaches; which necessitated the sweeping of the western Italian and Sicilian coastal tracks. The Straits of Messina and Bonifacio were likewise mined; nor was the task difficult since more submarines had reached Cattaro. The greatest danger continued off Malta, because of its central importance and one never knew whether during the night fresh dangers had been deposited. Only by the persistent sweeping of the paddlers and half a dozen M.L.'s could any sort of safety be guaranteed.

From the beginning of April a further modification was made in the Otranto Straits so as to confuse the enemy and render his passage less simple. Instead of netting along a fixed line, the drifters operated in a given belt stretching from just off the Italian coast and reaching not quite to Fano Island. Within this belt they worked with some vagueness, so that a U-boat would never be quite sure of the nets' positions. The M.L.'s were now permitted to patrol at night about five miles from this belt, and if only a submarine could be made to dive, it was hoped her entanglement would follow. Each week the drifters varied their line, but generally keeping just south of Lat. 40°. The 10-mile wide channel which had been kept clear on the Italian side, for the passage of Allied shipping, had become serviceable for enemy submarines, so it was now netted also and the M.L.'s patrolled here by night.

The new Italian Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Conte di Revel, was desirous that the nets should be laid continuously from Santa Maria di Leuca right across to Fano Island, the top of the net being 25 feet below the surface and its bottom some 200 feet. He also wanted the drifters to be stationed ten miles north and ten miles south of this obstruction, but he desired the British Navy to provide all the material except the net-mines which the French were to supply. Admiral di Revel was certainly well advised in having little faith with regard to the drifters, preferring

one long unbroken net, and at last we got the nucleus of a more permanent, more effective, obstruction which must inevitably soon come.

The British Admiralty were so preoccupied with their worries in Home Waters, that with all the changes of First Lords and First Sea Lords there had never been time or opportunity to give the Mediterranean that detailed consideration which it demanded. Owing to this, and the fact of divided commands, the offensive policy had continued to be neglected for the defensive, and this had not proved successful. Apart from the fixed trade-route principle made patent to the enemy by the presence of patrol vessels as if leading beacons, the Otranto Straits after all these months were still one of the weakest of all our naval links. At the best, this obstruction had nothing like enough small craft to make it effective : in bad weather the drifters were far from maintaining a perfect line, whilst very bad weather compelled them to haul their nets. It will be obvious to the reader that the only logical thing was to provide not a mobile, but a fixed, Otranto barrage. Just as a wooden barricade stretched across the road will be far more effective than a line of policemen for withstanding a rush, so a less pliable and yielding obstruction than unanchored nets would be more likely to stop those clever U-boats.

It was because the latter were still unchecked, and the Mediterranean was still a lake of peril, that another Naval Conference of senior officers must now be held. It met on board the French flagship *Provence* at Corfu on April 28, and continued till May 2. Besides Vice-Admiral Thursby from the Aegean, Rear-Admiral Kerr and Commodore Heneage from Italy, as well as several other British officers, there assembled not only French and Italian, but also Japanese representatives. Few items were so significant of the war's universality as the arrival of these Orientals to help in a European sea : nothing so indicated the Allies' shortness of patrols as to accept with gladness the aid of Japanese warships. For now there came up through the Suez Canal into the Middle Sea the light cruiser *Akashi* and the eight destroyers, *Katsura*, *Kayede*, *Ume*, *Kusunoki*, *Sakaki*, *Matsu*, *Sugi*, *Kashiwa*. Their services were at once employed for escorting valuable transports.

Put briefly, there emanated from this Conference a decision for merchantmen, where possible, to use the coastal routes by night, anchoring at daylight ; but where ships must traverse the open sea, as, for instance, that busy area between Egypt and Malta, steamers must be distributed along individual courses : in other



words, greater attention must be paid to routeing. The Conference was also in favour of a fixed barrage across Otranto Straits, but not less important was a fresh development which indirectly followed from this discussion. We have more than once perceived the lack of unity and cohesion which existed over the vast Mediterranean where three nationalities, though in alliance, possessed their separate interests. But now all and each realised the need for the appointment of a senior officer charged with the duty of ensuring merchant ships' safe passage through the Mediterranean. He must be centrally situated, controlling both the routeing and patrolling, as well as the escorting. It was further agreed that this presiding authority should be a British Vice-Admiral. Nominally under the French Commander-in-Chief, his appointment was indeed to be comprehensive enough as we shall see later.

Now this Corfu Conference had met in the month when Germany's submarine campaign attained its highest peak. Admiral Thursby had gone to Corfu in the ex-yacht *Triad* via the Corinth Canal, but the enemy had evidently learnt what was happening and when the *Triad* might return. Laying a mine-field in the Gulf of Patras, a German submarine hoped to entrap the Admiral, but information came timely and the canal route was avoided. Passing outside Cape Matapan, the *Triad* reached Salonika by a safer if longer journey. Nevertheless so recently as the evening of April 15 that good-looking British light cruiser *Sentinel*, whilst escorting the S.S. *Arcadian* through part of the Aegean, had been torpedoed north of Crete and down sank *Sentinel* in five minutes, survivors being taken to Suda Bay. Thus one more warship was added to a list already very long, and apart from ketches, torpedo craft, monitors and mine-layers, the British Aegean naval forces had now dwindled to the battleships *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon* still waiting at Mudros expectant for *Goeben*; the *Implacable* at Salamis (in which Rear-Admiral Hayes-Sadler flew his flag); and the light cruiser *Lowestoft* at Port Iero.

Surprises were not rare in Mudros, though it was really a notable advance in aerial navigation that just before midnight on March 20 a Zeppelin had come south to that island and dropped twenty-five bombs of 130 lbs. and less. Searchlights picked up the airship, fire being opened from ships' and shore guns, but she got away undamaged to the north-west making for Philippopolis in Bulgaria. She had done injury neither to person nor property.

A few weeks later (May 12) the enemy's Dardanelles guns having proved that with an 8·2-inch they could reach Kephalo harbour and the monitors, something had to be done. So the small monitor M-17 went outside and fired at the offending gun until a rising sea and wind stopped proceedings. The Germans observed that we used an aeroplane for spotting, and our enemy had the ingenuity to send wireless signals regulating M-17's firing ; but the monitor *Grafton* jambed this nonsense quickly, and our aeroplanes ascended to attack. They encountered two aircraft who bolted immediately.

The proximity of such hostile artillery became not too pleasant, wherefore Kusu Bay at the extreme north of this Imbros Island was netted to provide our monitors with a safe base out of reach from the mainland's guns. But during all those weeks between May and August, without the enemy becoming privy, a most interesting mine-field was gradually being laid off the Dardanelles' exit in accordance with Admiral Jellicoe's urgent desire. This would (as we shall soon see) be of the highest value in itself, but would also release destroyers for the direct duties of hunting submarines. Drifters and M.L.'s with hydrophones were sent to listen as further measures. Occasionally some of these mines broke adrift, and one of them actually bumped M.L. 198, though luckily without exploding. M.L.'s 202 and 208 were employed at the end of July laying the final sixteen mines which completed the Gallipoli trap : and if only this extensive series of lines were not dispersed by rough weather, something intensely exciting ought to happen should *Goeben* ere long make a dash outside.

In the meantime the Mediterranean seemed alive with happenings of all kinds this spring. Previously we mentioned Lieutenant-Commander Gravener and his submarine, and whilst the Corfu Conference was debating off Sicily this officer in E-2 had been granted what looked like the chance of a lifetime. A very large German U-boat disclosed herself in the act of looting one of those Italian brigs, which even to-day are characteristic along the Latin coast. There lay the enemy on the surface—stopped. Gravener fired two torpedoes—a sitting shot—but again that same defect which so often we have mentioned occurred. Both missiles ought to have hit, and both dived under. It was heartbreaking.

Bearing in mind the new disposition of the Otranto drifters previously mentioned as being roughly in on the Tricase-Fano line, with the M.L.'s to the southward, let us come to the early hours of May 15, a lovely calm morning of young summer. Daylight burst about 4 a.m., eight drifter divisions were out, but at

3 a.m. one had hauled her nets and gone back towards Taranto. Shortly afterwards there suddenly appeared in the dusk three Austrian light cruisers, but after making an inspection of the line went away till dawn when a systematic annihilation began. One cruiser started attacking the drifters at the western end, another from the eastern, whilst the third set to work in the centre.

Deliberately, and stopping about a hundred yards off, the enemy first ordered the fishermen into the small boats, or away from the drifters' guns, and to surrender. Certainly the Austrians behaved quite chivalrously, but what sort of a fight could a drifter armed with one 6-pounder put up against a cruiser having nine 3.9-inch and four smaller guns besides torpedoes? These little drifters were secured to their nets, but in any case too slow to run away from a 27-knotter. When called upon to surrender, Skipper Watt in the *Gowan Lea* refused to do anything of the sort, and actually fired his tiny gun at the enemy. "We'll fight to a finish," he said, and the Austrian gave him a broadside which damaged the gun and exploded a box of ammunition. Luckily *Gowan Lea*, though battered about, did not sink though some of the crew were injured.

Now Skipper Joseph Watt, as we saw in an earlier chapter, was a very fine fellow at his job, and his pluck sets a high standard for future generations. Farther off was the drifter *Floandi*, whose name we have often mentioned. The Austrian cruiser was giving her heavy punishment, sending shells into her hull, wounding some of the men, yet Skipper D. J. Nicholls had no intention of yielding, and his gun too did its best. Skipper Watt came along, helped in stopping up the holes and tending the wounded, but the enemy had passed down the line. To sum up, the Austrians had killed one officer and seventy men, besides taking eight officers prisoners. They had also sunk no fewer than fourteen of the forty-seven drifters—*Admirable*, *Avondale*, *Coral Haven*, *Craignoon*, *Felicitas*, *Girl Gracie*, *Girl Rose*, *Helenora*, *Quarry Knowe*, *Selby*, *Serene*, *Taits*, *Transit*, and *Young Linnet*. Thus did the names of fishermen's womenfolk pass into the British Navy's historic lists of *Arethusas*, *Dianas*, *Mary Roses*, *Phæbes*, *Princess Royals*, and the rest.

Having finished their frightfulness, the enemy ceased fire and made off towards Cattaro, whilst the M.L.'s who had been patrolling 3 miles to the south and had never been hit, were able to pass the news to other ships of what had happened. They also hurried the wounded into Gallipoli. Skipper Watt eventually

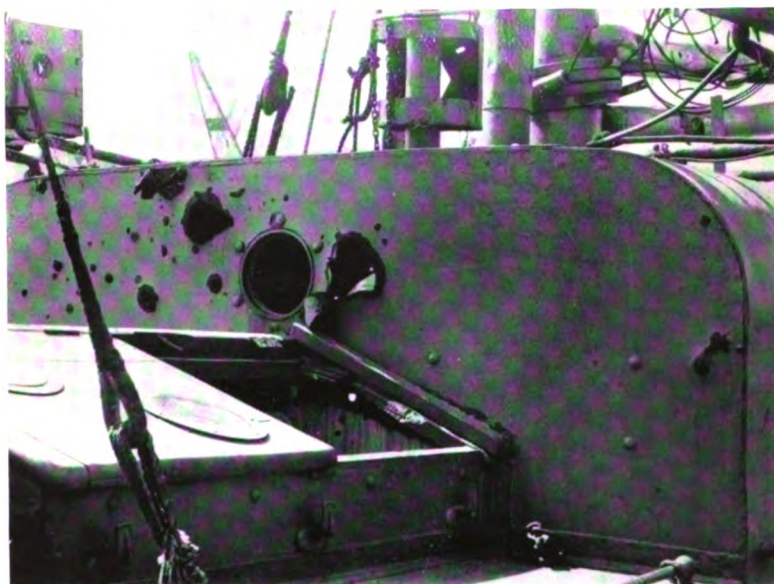
received the Victoria Cross, whilst his friend, Skipper Nicholls, was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal. How their respective ships looked just after the engagement will be seen from the accompanying photographs. "I think Skipper Watt and Skipper Nicholls showed some of the greatest bravery in the war," Admiral Mark Kerr once summed up this incident to me. And to-day we know that the Austrian cruisers were our old opponent *Helgoland* together with *Novara* and *Saida*, the senior officer being Captain Horthy<sup>1</sup> in *Novara*.

But this raid had preliminaries and sequels. On the preceding day the Austrians stationed three submarines at special spots: U-IV off Valona, the mine-layer UC-25 to drop her "eggs" off Brindisi, and U-XXVII to operate across the Adriatic between Brindisi and Cattaro. Two destroyers, *Czeper* and *Balaton* (whose names the reader will not have forgotten), soon after three o'clock on the morning of the raid in accordance with plan attacked three Italian transports shortly before the latter could reach Valona, and one steamer was sunk.

The retreating Austrian destroyers were soon to learn that it was impossible for them to raid the drifter line—so far away from Cattaro—and get back home untouched: however carefully timed, this expedition on the return journey must pass some distance from Brindisi, where British light cruisers and Franco-Italian destroyers lay. It was because the enemy knew these would come forth that UC-25's mines were deposited as an ambush, whilst U-XXVII ought to have a fair chance of catching our cruisers either coming out or going into port.

News of trouble in the Straits' southern end reached Brindisi, and at 5 a.m. H.M.S. *Bristol* with two Italian destroyers put to sea, followed half an hour later by H.M.S. *Dartmouth* with two destroyers likewise. About 9 a.m. the three Austrian light cruisers were sighted and at 9.30 a.m. action began. For two hours this continued, in spite of the enemy being able eventually to draw ahead making a curtain of smoke. The nett result was that whilst *Novara* was hit and seriously damaged by *Dartmouth*, Captain Horthy being wounded, there finally came out from Cattaro two large Austrian armoured cruisers which saved *Novara* from destruction and compelled the British light cruisers to break off action. Thus, only by superior speed and calling up heavier assistance at the end did the enemy manage to get home.

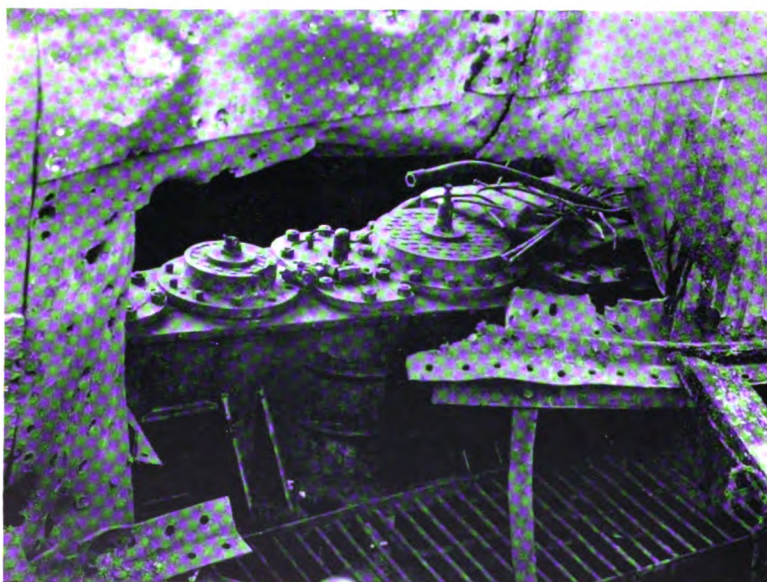
<sup>1</sup> His Serene Highness Admiral Horthy, afterwards Regent of Hungary.



#### GALLANT LITTLE SHIPS

Which resisted the Austrian raiders in the early hours of May 15, 1917. The upper picture of the drifter *Floandi* shows her damaged funnel and the hole made on the starboard quarter by a shell. The lower illustration shows the holes made in the galley of the drifter *Jean*.





#### INTERNAL DAMAGE

Apart from external injuries, serious damage to some of the drifters was made internally during the raid of May 15, 1917, when fourteen drifters were sunk. The upper photograph shows where an Austrian shell penetrated the *Jean's* deck. The lower picture displays the *Floandi's* engine-room casing opened out.

According to Admiral Kerr,<sup>1</sup> "The damaged enemy cruiser succeeded in getting into the harbour and then sank. The report of her sinking first came by Secret Service from the shore, but later was confirmed by the evidence of Italian aircraft flying over Cattaro."

On the way back to Brindisi, in that area where on other occasions British cruisers<sup>2</sup> had been accustomed to the sight of torpedoes, *Dartmouth* was struck by submarine and only after the greatest efforts did the British ship crawl into Brindisi. Most fortunately she did not hit the mines laid by UC-25. But the French destroyer *Boutefeu* this afternoon, whilst leaving to help *Dartmouth*, crashed into the mine-field so cunningly deposited outside the boom and blew up. On the whole, then, victory to-day belonged to the Austrians—not merely because of the units deleted but for the effect on strategy.

Although the Austrians could not afford too many adventures of this sort, which needed meticulous planning and perfect synchronisation, we too dared not risk a second raid on the Otranto line. Fourteen drifters sunk! Others badly knocked about and for some time unfitted for service! Many valuable lives sacrificed! It would not do. To-day we know that neither Horthy, nor his people, cared for the job of killing helpless fishermen—it amounted almost to massacre—and "we all hated fighting the British,"<sup>3</sup> yet this was the occasion for fighting and not for sentiment. Evidently the nets were inconveniencing the enemy: otherwise no raid would have been attempted. And as the mobile obstruction improved, so another onslaught might be expected.

Unfortunate though it may sound, we were now immediately forced to shift the net line farther south and permit the drifters to work by daylight only, sheltering every night in Tricase, Fano, Castro, Merlera. This meant that the Straits were completely clear for submarines to come and go as they pleased, always sure that the Mediterranean gate was open to them. This raid is to be regarded as the climax of the Otranto problem, and well demonstrated the tactical error of supposing that so weak and clumsy a method could be more than partially satisfactory. Occasionally hereafter the drifters did net the Straits during the dark hours, but only as a special and temporary measure when a submarine

<sup>1</sup> *The Navy in my Time*, p. 197-198.

<sup>2</sup> As, for example, H.M.S. *Dublin* (see Chapter III).

<sup>3</sup> *The Navy in my Time*, p. 196.

alarm had been raised : one light cruiser and three destroyers providing the necessary protection. Stationed in Taranto, Gallipoli, and St. George's Bay (western side of Corfu), they were always ready to be sent out ; but reliance began to be made rather on the listening devices, and M.L.'s with their hydrophones now patrolled the Straits at night, working  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles apart. This, however, must be regarded as the transition period between the abolition of the drifter line and the introduction of the fixed net barrage.

Whilst we can therefore not be surprised at the ease with which enemy submarines in the latter half of 1917 journeyed through this road to the Mediterranean, our foes were not going to have matters all their own way. We were on the eve of considerable improvements, yet very late in time, and it was to be a race against the limitations of resources. Nine days after the above devastating raid, UC-24 (another of those German mine-layers recently come from Germany, and sister to U-25) was just starting out from Cattaro for a trip when the French submarine *Circé*, watching that harbour's exit, fired a torpedo and the German boat never rose again.

But this was symbolical. Our enemies had passed the summit of success, and gradually they must see failure ahead. A week after the raid we had at last instituted the Mediterranean Convoy System which (in conjunction with the closed Adriatic door) could be the most effective blow to submarine war against shipping. The main commerce route extended from Cape Bon to Port Said, and it needed only four items for its safety : (1) merchant ships to sail not separately, but together ; (2) the convoys to be protected by war units equal to the task of fighting submarines by guns and depth-charges ; (3) routes to be kept secret and frequently changed ; (4) zig-zagging to be made compulsory in passing through possible danger-zones. These conditions, when once generally adopted, were worth infinitely more than extended patrols, occasional individual single escorts, and the special stunts of Q-ships that were so unlucky along the Mediterranean tracks.

But more than another year had still to be lived, and many an excitement was approaching.



## CHAPTER XXX

### BOMBING THE *GOEBEN*

**I**T was in June 1917 that King Constantine abdicated, being succeeded by his second son, Alexander. Thus did Greece witness the triumphant return of M. Venizelos to Athens as director of the Provisional Government, and under the latter's leadership a policy took shape that finally guided his compatriots into becoming actively one of our allies. But for the determination and unusual ability of this magnetic Premier controlling the youthful, inexperienced King Alexander, the Greeks might have continued to be a source of uncertainty and anxiety for months longer. Now, however, the Aegean clearly defined who were our friends, and on June 27 Greece declared war against the Central Powers.

Simultaneously the Germano-Turks were causing us some disquiet. They had reinforced their aircraft, mounted guns all along the coast, taken to mining both their own and our shores. If this meant anything, it suggested that *Goeben* would soon essay some raid out of the Dardanelles, but that could be contemplated with greater equanimity now that the blockade of Greece had been withdrawn, thereby releasing some of our naval units.

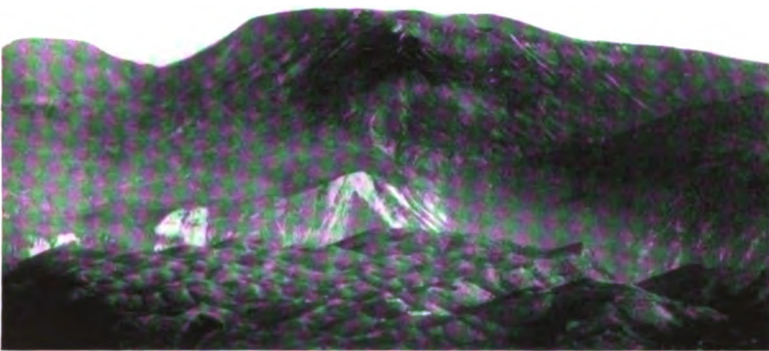
At this time, when escorts were so few that we had been glad to accept Japanese help, little satisfaction was afforded by the incident of June 11. The two destroyers *Sakaki* and *Matsu* had been escorting a British hospital-ship to Salonika and after a short visit to Mudros were now on their way back to Malta ; but having arrived in Lat. 36° 15' N., Long. 23° 51' E. (or that identical spot just east of Cape Malea where submarines had scored previously) a lurking U-boat torpedoed *Sakaki* with considerable loss of life. This Japanese destroyer did not sink, but was beached at Suda Bay (Crete) whence there came tugs, destroyers, and sloops to fetch her away on June 30. And, thanks to the recent political friendship, she could effect her repairs at Piraeus, which would be a great convenience now that Malta was so overworked.

This question of refits had become quite serious, especially

with regard to British destroyers, most of which had run over 100,000 miles (equivalent to three times round the world) since the beginning of hostilities : and they would soon become unfit to do their job. Italian shipyards were being used to ease the Malta problem, yet not much improvement could be discerned. Whenever the sad episode occurred of a Mediterranean warship foundering, there was just this doubtful consolation : the dockyards would never be concerned with her. All the same, the succession of sinkings made depressing intelligence, especially when least expected. For example, at the time of Constantine's abdication Admiral Thursby had sent to Salamis the transport S.S. *Abbassieh*, to be placed at the disposal of the British Minister, his staff, and the British colony of Athens in case of an emergency ; later on she went to Malta, and on July 4 had left there for Salonika under the escort of H.M.S. *Aster* with *Azalea* (two of the Flower class sloops). The enemy had evidently paid a recent visit, for the three ships were just east of Malta when *Aster* struck a mine and went down with the loss of ten men ; *Azalea* hit another mine, and they managed to beach her at Marsa Scirocco, but so bad were her injuries that Malta dockyard would have to detain her for three months.

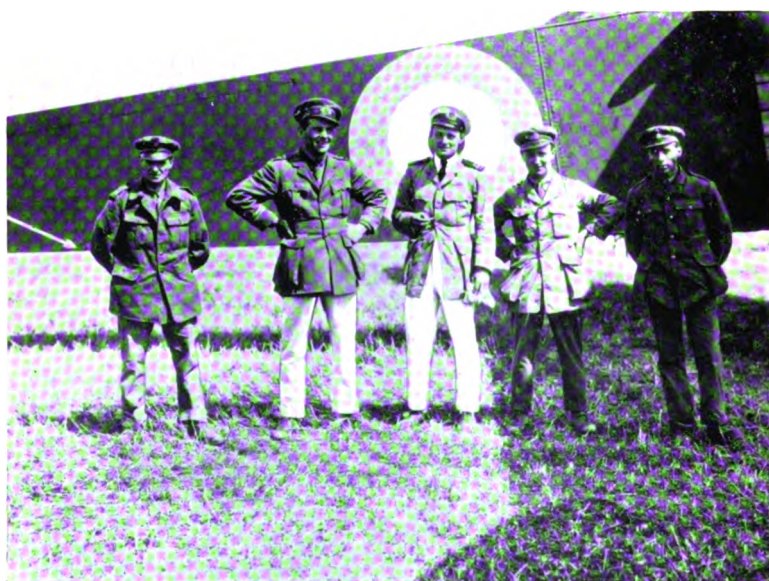
On the top of these disasters came that of *Redbreast*, which we last saw as a Q-ship, though this special service had concluded in September 1916. On July 15, 1917, she was commanded by Commander W. H. Coates, D.S.O., R.D., R.N.R., a most gallant officer, who had performed very valuable service in the eastern Mediterranean, and here came the third time that an enemy sank the ship in which he happened to be serving. It was also the last, for the U-boat sent him, his three officers, and forty men, to their doom ; the position of this action being well up the Aegean near Khios. Certainly even the most experienced seafarers could not avoid such sudden surprises from an unseen foe, possessing both daring and originality. Three days later, not far from Crete, a Greek caique named *Adelphotis* was shelled and sent to the bottom by a U-boat that had disguised herself as a sailing vessel likewise.

Finally, another mid-Aegean disappearance has to be recorded. The reader may remember the fleet-sweeper *Newmarket*, which had done such good work both at the Dardanelles and elsewhere. On July 16, at 7 p.m., she was sent out from Port Laki to assist the British S.S. *Firfield*, which had been torpedoed 10 miles north-west of Cape Papas, Nikaria Island. Since that date neither



#### FLYING TO CONSTANTINOPLE

Flight-Commander Savory's Handley-Page crossing over Marseilles harbour (upper picture). Crossing the wild Albanian Alps, found to be inaccurately mapped (lower picture).



#### THE RECORD FLIGHT

The upper picture shows the Handley-Page "hush-hush" machine, from which Flight-Commander Kenneth Savory (centre of group in lower picture) bombed the *Goeben*.

*Newmarket* nor any of her people has been seen, although a thorough search was made at the time. Her commanding officer, Commander Fitzroy H. Hall, R.N.R., evidently owed his fate to the same U-boat who sank *Redbreast* the previous day, and *Newmarket's* name was mentioned in the enemy's wireless communique of July 29 as having been destroyed by one of their submarines.

In contrast with these disheartening occurrences, let us now relate one of the brightest adventures of the whole war, the hero being Flight-Commander Kenneth Savory, R.N., whom we last saw during May 1916 flying from the Aegean to Constantinople, where he successfully dropped bombs. This plucky flight created a double record in long-distance and night flying, and he was awarded the D.S.O. But "adventures are to the adventurous," and that trip put into his mind the desire to drop bombs on *Goeben*. What a fine thing it would be for the young air section of the Navy if this powerful and historic battle-cruiser could be demolished! She had been the cause of Turkey's entering the war, she had been indirectly the inspiration of the Dardanelles campaign; her very existence still tied some of our sea forces to that neighbourhood and kept the mine-field waiting.

For months *Goeben* had been berthed at Stenia Creek, an inlet just off the Bosphorus, whither also she had brought as prize from the Black Sea, subsequent to one of her eastern cruises, the Russian S.S. *Olga*. The latter then became a depot ship in which the German destroyer crews lived when in harbour. It was known that Stenia dockyard was managed by a German naval engineer; that during the summer of 1915 half a dozen lighters had been anchored in double lines on the Emirghian side, with a large buoy at the end. Four wire nets were suspended between each lighter, the first being from the shore and the last from the buoy, thus providing an anti-submarine obstruction for two-thirds of the passage. Outside of these nets alongside the quay was *Olga*, whilst just inside (also moored to the quay) lay *Goeben*. The *Breslau*, various Turkish destroyers and torpedo-boats were within the obstruction, but their exact position varied. *Goeben* also owned a Cardiff collier carrying 4000 tons of precious South Wales coal, and this was used with economy for special occasions.

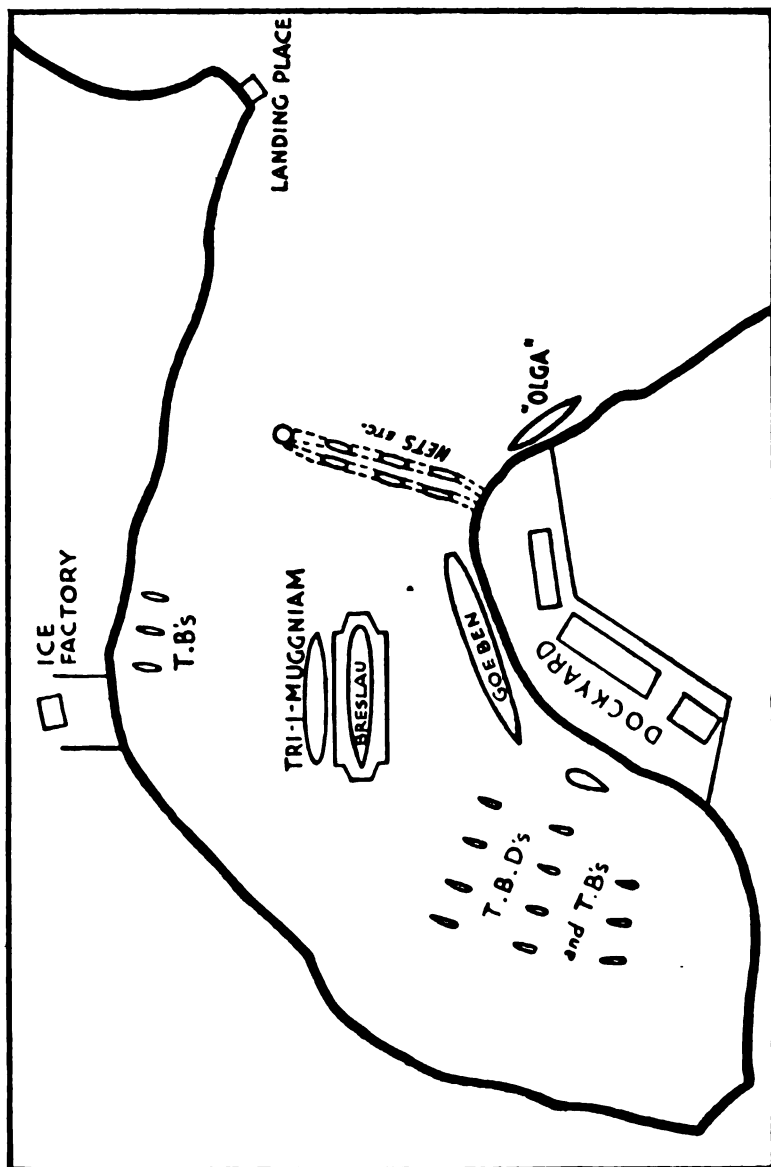
After a further period in the Aegean, spotting for the Fleet, raiding, and reconnaissance work, this intrepid officer's suggestion was accepted, he was given a free hand to complete arrangements and came home to England. Since those days the general

advance in aviation ; the improved size, speed, endurance, and weight-carrying abilities of aeroplanes ; the trans-Atlantic voyaging and regular service to our distant dominions ; have transformed the art and science of flying from the experimental to the permanent. But twenty years ago it was still confined to daring pioneers, and even at the beginning of war the experts very much doubted whether aeroplanes would be any use during hostilities.

When Savory was given the new creation of a " hush-hush " Handley-Page flying machine with two 275 horse-power Rolls-Royce engines, developing a speed of 60 miles an hour, this was a very special privilege indeed. It demanded not merely courage and technical ability of a high order, but that same sense of responsibility which is needed of one who is to command a super-Dreadnought battleship. The nephew of Admiral Savory (one time Director of Transport) possessed all these attributes, and the spring of 1917 found him busily engaged making the final preparations for another record. Armed with a chit " from top-side " ordering that Flight-Commander Savory be allowed to use the Handley-Page as necessary, and that " every facility is to be given him," this young veteran (so recently left school) might well be envied by thousands of his elders.

By the time that the month of May came round final tests were made to the great machine, and all details ready. To fly all the way from Hendon to Mudros was something that a bird might possibly have accomplished, but no human being hitherto had attempted. In addition to Savory as pilot, there were to accompany him Lieutenant P. T. Rawlings, R.N.V.R., as engineer ; Lieutenant H. McClelland, R.N.A.S., as second pilot ; and two ratings as mechanics. Total, five. But the machine must also carry with her five men's bedding and baggage, tool-boxes, three spare wheels, ammunition, two spare four-bladed propellers covered with tarpaulin fixed to the side of the fuselage. Besides a complete spare engine in parts—lest a breakdown should occur—clothes for five men to last them three months, a number of minor articles also had to be carried so as to make her completely independent and self-contained. She would have to travel 2000 miles, weighing 6 tons, and during part of the journey over territory that no aviator so far had crossed. Apart altogether from the dangers in passing from one war theatre to another, the navigational risks for such a huge bomber were very real.

So carefully guarded was the date of her departure that fake



STENIA CREEK, CONSTANTINOPLE  
Showing position of Goeben, Breslau, and S.S. Olga

instructions were made out and issued to the Commanding Officer of the Royal Naval Air Station at Hendon. This document, kindly lent to me by Savory himself, is before me as I write : it contained the information that these three officers were to travel by the 10.35 a.m. train from Charing Cross, and be there " about an hour before," *en route* for Boulogne. Actually they all flew off from Hendon on May 22, the very day that the Convoy System in the Mediterranean was inaugurated.

Savory's route was planned as follows : Paris, Lyons, Marseilles, Toulon, Fréjus (on the Riviera just outside St. Raphael), Pisa, Rome, Naples, Otranto, thence across the Adriatic and Albanian Alps to Salonika, and so to Mudros. All went well till arriving by the blue Mediterranean at Fréjus, where the French to-day have both a seaplane station, and a fine aerodrome immediately behind the beach ; but in 1917 the landing-ground was a mere sandy field and partly bog. Into this latter the Handley-Page stuck and almost capsized, nor could she be extracted till one hundred men pushed her on to hard land. Even then the aviators were compelled to wait for a wind from the sea before trying to start, and her six-tons weight sank her up to the axles in soft sand. This time 150 men pulled her out, so that on May 29 she took the air, though with just two feet clearance of an awkward dyke.

No sort of secrecy seemed to have been maintained either in France or Italy. The Roman journals even published accounts of " Un aeroplano inglese da Londra a Roma," so that (to counteract this unfortunate announcement) it had to be stated officially that she was actually on her way to England from Naples. Before finally crossing the Adriatic it became necessary to lighten the machine of stores by 650 lb., but the Albanian Alps were not too easy, because some of them rose 9000 feet, whilst many mountains did not appear on the map at all : it was a case of steering by compass and trusting that the engines would not fail. What with clouds, winds, and atmospheric disturbances ; flying over wild country, too, where Bulgarian horsemen were ready to take them prisoners ; this was the most anxious portion of the trip. But the Salonika aerodrome of the R.N.A.S. concluded this stage, and on June 8 Savory had reached Mudros, where he reported to Admiral Thursby.

To have made this trans-European flight of 1955 miles without mishap was a world's record as regards distance, duration, and weight carried ; yet the main duty had yet to be tackled. The



latest information was that *Goeben* and *Breslau* were still in Stenia Creek, that four anti-aircraft guns had been mounted in Constantinople near the War Office, whilst several were on the other side of the Golden Horn. Savory now began to practise bombing a target about the size of *Goeben*, and from a height of 200 to 1500 feet, but it was disappointing on arrival at Mudros to find that neither bombs nor fuses (said to have been despatched by steamer two months ago) had turned up. Time was getting on, July 3 would be the first practicable date for the projected raid, and July 12 the last.<sup>1</sup> His plan was to leave Mudros about 8.30 or 9 p.m., the distance to Constantinople being 210 miles, so that the double journey at an average speed of 60 miles should be done in about seven hours.

The orders issued to him were to make *Goeben* the principal target, and drop at least ten of the 112-lb. bombs on her, the remainder to be aimed at the S.S. *General* (used as Admiral Souchon's headquarters), the War Office, and certain other targets if possible. By July 9, all things being in readiness, the Handley-Page set out from Mudros aerodrome at 8.47 p.m., Savory (now Squadron-Commander) as pilot, McClelland as bomb-dropper, and Rawlings as observer. Whether they would come back, who could tell? If the Turkish guns should destroy them, this would not be the first occasion for Savory's death to be announced in the Press.

The engines were running beautifully, at 9.45 the aeroplane passed over Suvla, and little more than two hours later Constantinople (brilliantly lit up) lay beneath them. Stenia Creek was located, and circled three times to make sure of *Goeben*'s position. The latter was then attacked at right-angles to the Bosphorus, i.e. against the moon, from a height of 800 feet, after which four bombs were released. They did not actually hit the battle-cruiser, but were quite near—a few yards to starboard, where some torpedo craft were evidently lying moored alongside. The second salvo of two more explosives seemed to hit *Goeben* just forward of midships. A large upheaval and heavy conflagration were caused by the first bombs, and soon the shore guns began to bang, as the aeroplane turned west and let go two more bombs from 1300 feet over the *General*, whose stern was struck. Two direct hits were made in the centre of the War Office building, and now it was time to leave for home, after thirty-five thrilling minutes over the capital.

<sup>1</sup> Full moon on July 4 was at 9.41 p.m.

The trio had been given a hot reception from all sorts of calibres, including machine-guns mounted on house roofs, which made low flying extremely dangerous. No searchlights were used, *Goeben* remained in darkness, but *Breslau* could be seen in the creek somewhat brilliantly illuminated, and all lighthouses on the Sea of Marmara were working normally. Now so perfectly had this nocturnal adventure been planned and carried out that the machine landed on Mudros aerodrome at 3.40 a.m., or seven minutes less than the seven hours. Not one of the trio had been even wounded, yet their escape from death seems remarkable : for on examination the Handley-Page was found to have been penetrated by twenty-six bullets, and the oiling system of one engine disabled.

And the results of this gallant enterprise ?

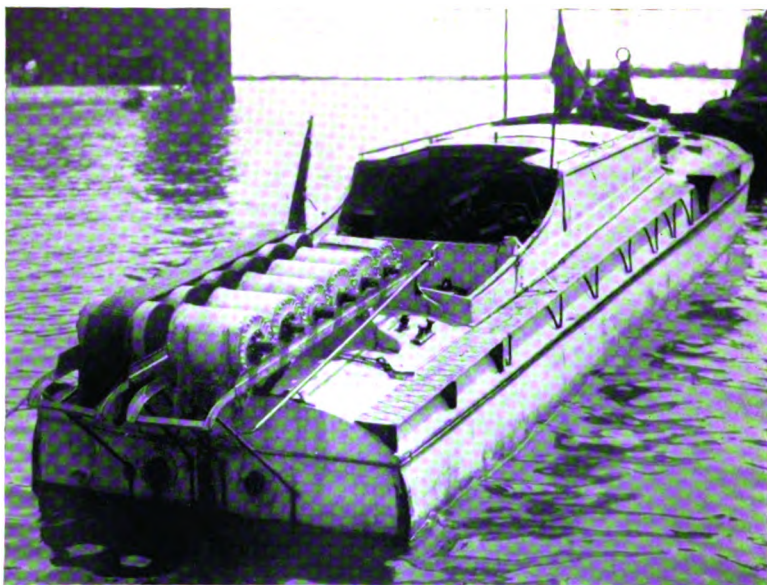
Damage to the *General* and the War Office had certainly been made, but *Goeben* (thanks to her decks being excellently protected against plunging shell-fire) was only slightly injured by the second salvo. So she still remained afloat, still a serious menace, and another occasion would in a few months be afforded aviators to prove how extremely difficult is their task of giving the knock-out blow to a big modern warship. Nevertheless, the first salvo had been most successful : in just missing *Goeben*, the bombs fell upon two torpedo-boats alongside her and destroyed both vessels. Not only could the undertaking be regarded as worth while, but Squadron-Commander Savory (to whom I am indebted for considerable information) came home to England for the purpose of organising an aerial squadron which was going to make a big bombing of Constantinople ; but so experienced an officer was needed for the enterprise of treating Berlin as German flyers had dropped explosives over London. It was Armistice which prevented that further adventure.

Two days after the Constantinople flight a different sort of enterprise was started when eight M.L.'s—two for Gibraltar, two for Malta, and four bound to Taranto—left Portsmouth under their own power and reached their destinations via Paris and the Rhône. We still needed every available craft that could float, for the Allies were losing 500,000 tons of shipping a month : yet Germany's fighting spirit had begun to crack, and a mutinous disposition manifested itself in the High Sea Fleet during August. That month was notable in the Mediterranean, too, for a complete reorganisation of senior commands. Vice-Admiral the Hon. Sir Somerset Gough-Calthorpe proceeded to take up his appointment



### PASSING OVER NAPLES

Flight-Commander Savory on his way from England to bomb the *Goeben* at Constantinople.



*Courtesy of Italian Government*

# ITALIAN M.A.S. BOATS

(Top) : Anti-submarine motor launch with depth-charges.  
 (Bottom) : Flotilla of M.A.S. boats in Savona Harbour.

as Commander-in-Chief of all British naval forces in the Mediterranean, his flag being flown ashore at Malta. He was to be in charge of all Allied patrols and escorts, controlling routes and traffic, yet subject to the general authority of the French commander-in-chief. So also Vice-Admiral Sir Cecil Thursby was succeeded by Rear-Admiral Fremantle, who came back to command of the British Aegean squadron, whilst Rear-Admiral Kerr hauled down his flag and Commodore Heneage took over the British Adriatic naval force.<sup>1</sup>

The famous fire at Salonika had broken out on August 18. Fanned by a northerly gale, it soon burned out a large part of the town, though parties landed from H.M.S. *St. George* and *Latona* were able to save the Town Hall. Less ardent was the new king of the Hellenes in regard to the Allies' cause, though Venizelos was the real personality that mattered. A good deal of malaria and sand-fly fever this summer affected our men on some of the Aegean islands, but that did not prevent an almost perpetual aerial warfare. One day we might bring down a couple of enemy aeroplanes reconnoitring Lemnos in the morning, whilst on the next day one of our machines with three people failed to return. That was a special occasion when the Royal Naval Air Service machines flew over the Dardanelles from Mudros on October 18 and dropped fifteen bombs on Chanak, because the Kaiser had been reported to be visiting there.

The main consideration and source of anxiety was still that of trade protection in the Mediterranean, the risks having been such that a good deal of the Oriental traffic had been diverted via the Cape of Good Hope. The remainder was using the coastal routes so far as possible, and by night; otherwise the convoy principle and dispersed routes were employed. Fortunately the Mediterranean contained numerous harbours of refuge, but for the transport of troops and material to Salonika the sea passage was now considerably shortened by using the railway through Italy, ending at Taranto. There is no sort of doubt that the appointment of Admiral Gough-Calthorpe, and the gradual adoption of ships sailing in convoys, were about to exercise a decisive effect on the big problem. There remained, however, this difficulty: the need for more escorts. True, the number of Japanese destroyers had

<sup>1</sup> Proceeding via Taranto, Sir Somerset Gough-Calthorpe hoisted his flag at Malta on August 26. Admiral Fremantle joined the yacht *Triad* at Taranto, and after calling at Corfu went through the Corinth Canal to Lemnos. His flag was hoisted on August 25, this being also the date when Admiral Kerr returned home.



by August been raised from eight to twelve, and six destroyers had arrived all the way from Australia, so that the Middle Sea now included forty-five British destroyers plus twelve Japanese, or fifty-seven in all. From this there must be deducted twelve for the Dardanelles patrol, which left too few for escort, convoy, and direct anti-submarine work.

In brief, apart from the Otranto Straits, these final months of the war were identified with : (1) Ensuring security for trans-Mediterranean traffic. (2) Blockading Bulgaria, Turkey, and the coasts of Asia Minor : preventing *Goeben* and *Breslau* from making raids : co-operating with the Army on the Struma front : protecting our mine-fields off the Dardanelles : keeping down the fire of enemy guns on the Gallipoli peninsula and Asia Minor coast which attacked Imbros, Mavro, and Tenedos : counteracting enemy aircraft, and, on the other hand, annoying the enemy by our aerial visits. (3) Hunting U-boats all the time.

Weak though it might be, the two British battleships, *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon*, at Mudros, together with the light cruiser *Lowestoft*, based on Port Iero, composed the force which directly denied German egress from the Dardanelles Straits. As the months sped by the probability of *Goeben*, and her sister, making contact with the Austrian Fleet seemed more remote : contrariwise the possibility of the two ships making a spectacular assault on Imbros, Stavros, and even Salonika—either independent of, or in conjunction with, attack by submarines and aircraft—appeared less unlikely.

At the time of this reshuffling of regional flag-officers we still suffered by the number of naval fronts. Additional to the many drifters and M.L.'s the Otranto Straits now were using fifteen sea-planes besides six aeroplanes. Port Said needed three small monitors for the defence of Egypt and operations against the Syrian coast in support of the British Army. Destroyers, sloops, and other small craft for escorting, patrolling, and hunting, were to be found at Alexandria, Suda, Malta, Gibraltar. Whilst Corfu continued to be the principal base of the French Fleet, warships flying the tricolour were stationed at Salamis, Salonika, and a small Syrian division on Port Said ; whilst their destroyers were distributed so far apart as Brindisi, Argostoli, Milo, Bona, and Toulon. The Italian Fleet retained its main base in Taranto for the battle fleet ; but Brindisi for cruisers, light cruisers, and torpedo craft. Venice, however, because of its propinquity to Austria's bases of Pola and Trieste, contained a battle squadron

and numerous torpedo craft. Some of the latter were stationed also at Valona, whilst anti-submarine flotillas (including fast motor-boats) could be found in such ports as Savona, Genoa, Spezia, Leghorn, and Naples. Indeed, the Mediterranean theatre of operations was so vast that the Allies could not expect to be powerful everywhere, but the enemy could choose his own time and weakest target.

If the Italians particularly retained their independence (as, for example, with regard to anti-submarine duties), the Japanese flotilla of Rear-Admiral Sato based on Malta was never formally placed under the British commander-in-chief, but worked "in consultation with" our senior naval officers.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### GIBRALTAR AND GAZA

**W**HEN we think of the Mediterranean submarines we must not imagine that theirs was a carefree task, and it would be truer to say that each month their lives were getting more precarious. For seven days this autumn a certain U-boat in the Aegean was hunted persistently and given no rest : even when he came up for air, and to charge his batteries, he would find one of our craft waiting, so down on the bottom he must sit till our hydrophones heard nothing and listeners moved away.

But the reader will be especially interested to know the technique employed when negotiating Gibraltar Straits. After the freedom of the Atlantic this approach towards the narrows made any submarine officer feel nervous, and I am indebted to a British master mariner (Captain W. H. Williams) for giving me an impression of how a U-boat ran the channel between Europe and Africa. The former had been in command of the S.S. *Roanoke*, and on August 12 of this year had been taken prisoner by UB-48 when the German sank his ship to the north-west of Scotland. Now, it will be recollected that Lieutenant-Commander Steinbauer had brought UB-47 to the Mediterranean and then gone home : the same officer was now on his way from Germany to Cattaro with UB-48.

His temper got worse by the time the Spanish coast was reached in Trafalgar Bay, and a patrol craft showed up. Then followed the depth-charges, which shook them all up pretty badly. Inside the submarine everything was "soon in pitch darkness, water washing about," till they got the emergency lights going. This was August 22, and next day UB-48 learnt by wireless of a convoy due to arrive off Cape Spartel at 8 o'clock that night. Sure enough it did appear, and, when 25 miles west of the Cape, Steinbauer fired a torpedo against the S.S. *Winlaton* (3270 tons) but missed. The second struck her, she foundered with the loss of two lives, but her master (Captain Murray) was brought aboard



the submarine as prisoner. "I now had a pal after twelve days of loneliness."

"When passing through the Straits about midnight," says Captain Williams, "Steinbauer again requested my presence on the conning-tower, this time to show me how kind the British Navy was in escorting him through. At a distance he showed me a destroyer on one side and a chaser (an M.L.) on the other. He grinned this time, but the outlines of these two were barely visible as compared to what the conning-tower would be to them." Night and shadows, and inky sea, made it not easy for spotting submarines, so we can scarcely marvel that not one U-boat finally failed to enter the Mediterranean after making the attempt. As to the U-boats' habit of letting out oil to the surface, in order to fool a patrol to believe that the enemy had been sunk, Captain Williams tells me this "was a joke in the UB-48 after action." The same information is confirmed by Skipper Bell, who, on February 11 of this year, was in the fishing steam-trawler *Mary Bell*. When 50 miles to the east of Aberdeen UC-44 sank his ship and took himself prisoner. Four days later the submarine was attacked about 11 a.m. by two British destroyers, whose depth-charges destroyed all electric fittings, placing the boat in darkness. In order to feign loss UC-44 then put into the after torpedo tube not merely oil but some chairs, which were ejected to the surface.

Steinbauer had no trouble in reaching Cattaro on September 2 now that the Otranto line was neither one thing nor the other. But UB-49, which had also left Germany this August, was following only a few days astern. She was in charge of Lieutenant-Commander von Mellenthin, and not far from Gibraltar on September 8 encountered H.M. Yacht *Narcissus*, who damaged UB-49 so seriously that the latter could not carry on. The German therefore entered Cadiz for repairs, and the Spanish Government interned her three days afterwards. On October 6 von Mellenthin broke his parole, and under cover of night escaped in this submarine, made his way past Italy, and reached Cattaro. This was one of the very few instances where a pre-war armed pleasure yacht had opportunity for gravely injuring the enemy. It is a strange coincidence that on the day UB-49 limped into Cadiz, U-49, his previous boat, was sunk by gunfire of the S.S. *British Transport* in the Atlantic.

The contiguity of certain islands to Asia Minor was the cause of increasing trouble when the Turks kept bringing longer-range guns to fire across the water at British stations. Suddenly,

at the beginning of October, the Turks opened a fierce bombardment on Thermi aerodrome from a position facing Mitylene Channel. It was believed that the guns were taken out of the *Breslau*, and they may have been brought up in reply to the energies of our aviators. For on July 30 the R.N.A.S. special bombing squadron proceeded to Thermi and began operations around Smyrna, such as on important railway workshops, store-houses, bridges, causing immense damage. Valuable reconnaissances were also made along that coast between Smyrna and the Gulf of Adramyti. Since the enemy now rendered our aviation ground untenable, a hurried evacuation had to be made on the nights of October 9 and 10, as well as the early portions of 10 and 11. Moreover, this was made under fire, which did not assist the workers. Captain C. G. Chichester, R.N., from the light cruiser *Forward*, came ashore and took charge. Before the first night's proceedings began the Turks had been heavily bombarding all day the aerodrome, hangars, road, and camp; but officers and men of the R.N.A.S. had at once removed the two serviceable machines.

The nocturnal job now was to get away the bombs, petrol, and valuable stores, some of which went by lighters to Iero and Mitylene, and some by French military motor-lorries. Finally, after dismounting the anti-aircraft guns and striking camp, the evacuation was completed, thanks partly to the fact of the enemy's shells being mostly "duds," but especially to the admirable timetable and working parties from H.M.S. *Forward* and the French lorry drivers. Of the former must be mentioned Petty-Officer Albert John Howard and Leading Stoker Edward Chivers, who, whilst under fire, coolly cleared away the aerodrome's armoury of detonators, bombs, and bomb-exploders.

Meanwhile the Franco-Italian project of a *fixed* net barrage was coming into reality across Otranto Straits, the curtain being 150 feet deep and supported by moored buoys. The British drifters were largely employed this autumn laying the obstruction and attaching the mines. Next came the six Australian destroyers to work in turn with the French destroyers protecting it. Thus, what with this immobile net, the mobile drifters and M.L.'s, the destroyers on patrol, the aircraft above, the hydrophones below that led to the shore, matters were now improving. Of course, to lay this fixed net from a position 7 miles off the Italian coast to Fano Island was an immense and slow business. If the design belonged to our Allies the nets were British, and vast quantities

of stores from England began to reach the Adriatic. Revision of ideas, modifications of plans ; the time for accumulating enough netting, buoys, mines, and the rest ; somewhat delayed the ultimate arrangement. From April, 1918, the fixed barrage grew steadily, though it was not completed till the end of September. Even its partial construction, together with a deep mine-field, laid east of Otranto, had begun to tell on the enemy severely by June—as we shall see very shortly—for these 150 feet nets were submerged to another 30 feet, which caused a submarine to make the considerable dive of 180 feet.

It is a pity that these Straits were still open at the end of 1917 : not only because this year was to see the loss of merely two submarines from Cattaro, but for the reason that in particular UC-38 slipped through. Commanded by Lieutenant Wentlandt, she had come out to join the flotilla during the first half of 1917, and in November was operating east of Egypt. During that autumn the Navy was trying to help General Allenby's army that would soon make its brilliant advance up Palestine. The big monitor *Raglan*, the smaller ones M-15, M-29, M-31, M-32, were all to bombard certain positions ashore, mark buoys having previously been laid. Two trawlers and three drifters (the latter each towing half a mile of indicator-nets) were told off to protect *Raglan*, whose lack of speed and of manœuvring power obtained permission for her to anchor. In addition, the old French *garde-côte Requin*, with three protective French destroyers ; the two British (river) gunboats *Ladybird* and *Aphis* ; and the two British destroyers *Comet* and *Staunch*, which were to escort the S.S. *City of Oxford*, carrying three seaplanes ; were all part of this miscellaneous force. They were based on Port Said.

In order to bombard Gaza firing positions were taken up on October 30, and continued till November 11, when the squadron started back for Port Said. That these ships, each in their respective duties, materially had aided the Army's advance, was at once recognised both by General Sir Edmund Allenby, Commander-in-Chief of the Egypt Expeditionary Force, and Lieutenant-General Bulfin commanding the Army's left wing. That it was also hard work for everyone may be gathered from the single fact of Commander C. J. Crocker's signalman (in M-31) being on the bridge practically day and night for five days. The sad contrast consisted of two losses during November 11 : H.M.S. *Staunch* and M-15, by the torpedoes from UC-38.

Such, however, is fate, that this submarine, after going back to

Cattaro and filling up with mines, left there again on December 1 to lay them in various parts of the Mediterranean ; and she certainly deposited an ambush in the Gulf of Patras, which blew up a trawler. Now on December 13 that four-funnelled French cruiser *Chateaurenault* (8200 tons), which we have mentioned more than once, set out from Taranto with a crew of 447 and 985 soldiers for Salonika. Proceeding at 15 knots, she crossed the Ionian Sea escorted by the two destroyers *Lansquenet* and *Mameluck*. The course was that short route to Salonika via the channel separating Santa Maura island from Ithaca, thence through the Corinth Canal. At the entrance to the Santa Maura pass, UC-38, on the 14th, was hanging about in readiness : she quickly torpedoed the cruiser, which, however, did not sink immediately.

Every man except a few unfortunate seamen was saved by the two destroyers and three trawlers. The holed ship looked like being saved, and a trawler took her in tow, whereupon the submarine launched a second torpedo, which easily sent *Chateaurenault* to the bottom. The *Lansquenet*, although her decks were full of frightened soldiers, rushed to attack UC-38, and deluged her with depth-charges, which stopped every German watch and made the boat leak. The water fused the port electric motor, so she ran on her starboard motor dead slow till the hull contained a small lake aft. Down dropped the stern, up went her bows, and the men were sent forward. This caused the starboard motor to be fused also, so the captain blew his ballast tanks and rose to the surface. There was no alternative but to surrender, and gunfire sent UC-38 to follow the cruiser's wreck. After the surviving Germans had been taken on board the French destroyer, they fell down on their knees and pleaded for mercy, whilst Wendlandt (who was a reserve officer) mounted the bridge and remarked that he supposed the French would shoot him. He got badly snubbed when ordered to leave the bridge, and was reminded that his captors were not Boches.

This behaviour from a crew, which had recently sunk three of the Allies' warships, seems to our minds beyond comprehension. Among those who served in the German U-boat section were some very able and very courageous men, whose exploits one cannot help admiring. There were, however, other commanding officers for whom one entertains quite different feelings. Nor need we disclose the name of that U-boat captain who was described by his own crew as a bully and coward. I know of at least one

person who met him under strange circumstances, and summed up his character in much stronger terms. For the submarine skipper of whom we speak was not a great seaman, and depended almost entirely on his navigating warrant officer for handling the boat, and had a great genius for collecting loot before his victims foundered. Thus were obtained dozens of chronometers, large quantities of champagne, whisky, and tinned foods. These were afterwards distributed among German and Austrian officers, or sent home to friends. When the crew, who had shared discomfort and danger, were given only bully beef and ordinary provisions, grave discontent manifested itself, and some began pilfering. The captain threatened to have them court-martialled, but the men defied him, and he did not pursue the matter.

In another U-boat using the Adriatic on the way back to Cattaro the escape from death was remarkable. One of our ablest submarines fired a torpedo at her, but it landed on the German's deck and went right over the other side. Three more were aimed, and they missed likewise—still further instances of how disappointing were these British missiles. But the German navigating officer thought he had been quite near enough to finality, refused to embark on another submarine voyage, and got a safer job ashore.

At the beginning of 1918 Rear-Admiral Fremantle, having been appointed to the Admiralty, handed over the Aegean command to Rear-Admiral Hayes-Sadler. The new year was to be full of incident, of momentous developments following quickly after each other, and hard-earned lessons were being put into execution with valuable results. Mines were still being found off Alexandria, Port Said, Malta, causing losses to our war vessels, but at last we had got the upper hand over enemy submarines. In the whole of 1917 both of the sunken U-boats fell to French activity, but from early January 18 a very different story begins. On the 8th H.M. sloop *Cyclamen* was passing through Lat. 37° 30' 30" N., Long. 10° 38' E. (off Bizerta) whilst escorting a convoy. The former was using her explosive paravanes, and one of them exploded, after which she dropped a depth-charge. Result: up rose the bows of UB-69, which was on passage from Germany to Cattaro, but quickly her fate turned as she vanished below the surface for the last occasion.<sup>1</sup> Ten days later, in much the same

<sup>1</sup> The explosive paravane was a torpedo-shaped device used whilst the ship remained under way, and set to the required depth. On impact with a submarine's hull the charge would be detonated.

district, another convoy, escorted by another sloop (H.M.S. *Campanula*), destroyed UB-66. The latter had also but recently arrived from Germany, and was now attacking the convoy by torpedoes. *Campanula* dropped depth-charges on her, and that was the end of a second enemy.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### SORTIE OF GOEBEN AND BRESLAU

**T**HE Great Day—so long visualised, discussed, doubted, yet prepared for—arrived on Sunday, January 20, 1918. Ever since August 10, 1914, the *Goeben* and *Breslau* had remained within the Dardanelles. They had cruised the Black Sea for thousands of miles, they had made trips across the Sea of Marmara, their base had been Stenia Creek for most of the nights ; yet not once had either of them come south past Gallipoli for nearly three and a half years. And all this while the British Navy had kept ceaseless vigil off the entrance.

Less than three weeks following Admiral Fremantle's departure for the Admiralty, where he was to be Deputy Chief-of-Staff to the new Board constituted after Admiral Jellicoe's resignation, the Germans and Turks were prepared to make that raid which followed logically as a result of our bases at the islands of Mudros, Imbros, and Tenedos. These two fast men-of-war had worked together in the Mediterranean and Black Sea for so long a period, and been in such a number of tight corners, that their present chances were better than a wild gamble. The plan was to wipe out our naval forces within range of the Straits' entrance, to bombard Lemnos, and then Tenedos, besides any transports ; in other words, to deal a smashing blow against our hold of the Aegean.

As a result of countless aeroplane visits over these islands, the enemy kept themselves up to date concerning types and numbers of warships to be found at the respective bases. They were also well aware of our mine-fields just outside the Dardanelles entrance, for in that clear, sunlit water these submerged dangers could be readily seen, and the German aviators brought home some excellent photographs showing the mine-lines. The date for this sortie was splendidly chosen, since the state of affairs in Turkey was not too happy just now, unrest in Austria had reached serious proportions, further trouble threatened among the crews of the High Sea Fleet, and a spectacular raid by a famous pair of veterans might do much to encourage drooping spirits. Moreover,

a new flag-officer, Admiral von Rebeur-Paschwitz, commanded the Turkish Navy (of which *Goeben* and *Breslau* formed part), and if he could sweep away into destruction those watchers encircling the Dardanelles entrance, he might make that as open and free as the Austrian light cruisers had done for the Otranto Straits.

On January 12 the light cruiser *Lowestoft* had reached Mudros from Taranto, and found very little trace of the enormous camps that used to be so conspicuous. All the temporary buildings had been taken away, the natives had ploughed and sown the ground. Besides this newly-commissioned ship there were but one battleship, *Agamemnon*, the two light cruisers, *Foresight* and *Skirmisher*, two efficient destroyers and a sloop. It so happened that the battleship *Lord Nelson*, flying Rear-Admiral Hayes-Fisher's flag, had left Mudros on the 16th for a service visit to Salonika, and doubtless the enemy's aeroplanes carried back that information to the German Admiral. For one reason or another, such as being away on escort, or on passage, or under repairs, the above were the only units at Mudros in January capable of fighting.

Let us set these German and British vessels down in tabular form :

#### BRITISH

NAME OF SHIP	TONNAGE	SPEED IN KNOTS	ARMAMENT
<i>Agamemnon</i>	16,500	18	Four 12-in., ten 9·2-in., and twenty-four 3-in.
<i>Lowestoft</i>	5,440	25	Nine 6-in.
<i>Foresight</i>	2,945	25	Nine 4-in.
<i>Skirmisher</i>	2,940	25	Nine 4-in.

#### GERMAN (TURKISH)

<i>Goeben</i>	22,640	25 to 29	Ten 11-in., twelve 5·9-in., twelve 3·4-in.
<i>Breslau</i>	4,478	27	Twelve 4·1-in.

A comparison of the above shows that von Rebeur-Paschwitz had superiority of speed (the most essential characteristic for a raider), which would enable him to leave *Agamemnon* miles behind. The contest would then be that of a battle-cruiser and armoured cruiser against three light cruisers, in which the Germans



would be superior both as to speed and still more as to gun-power. It is therefore obvious that, barring bad luck, our enemy had a first-class chance to make a tip-and-run expedition, smash up the outposts, and get back within the Dardanelles forts before being interfered with. A favourable opportunity would be in the early morning or immediately preceding dusk: a kindly enveloping fog is rare up the Adriatic, but morning mist in the winter is not unlikely. Surprise and concealment being the very essence of raids, early morning would be preferable so as to get past the look-outs unseen.

Captain T. E. Wardle had recommissioned *Lowestoft* with a new crew only a fortnight previously. She had come to Mudros specially as a match for *Breslau*, and completed calibration the day before the sortie. One officer tells me that a German aeroplane flew over Mudros a day or two preceding the raid, and over Salonika too: wherefore the enemy must have known definitely of *Lord Nelson's* absence from her base. Lastly, as if to make all the conditions perfect, Sunday morning's atmosphere was ideal for the German adventure. "Fog early," wrote one of the British captains in his Mudros private journal, "and a fog for about twenty minutes at 8.30."

Could any combination of circumstances be more suitable for the enemy?

Now the sudden and totally unexpected appearance of *Goeben* and *Breslau* was the very climax in the remarkable careers of two quite exceptional warships, and for that reason not less than for future study, the story deserves to be told with every possible detail. To that end I have received the valuable assistance of original records and personal statements from several commanding officers who were on the spot at the time. I therefore propose to present the episode from more than one angle, and first to give a brief outline of the enemy's movements.

Shortly before leaving Constantinople there had been put into the German Admiral's hands a chart with vague pencillings purporting to indicate the dangerous British mine-fields' limitations lying off the Dardanelles entrance. This document had been captured from a British trawler which, during the previous month, unfortunately ran ashore in the Gulf of Saros. It seems to have been regarded by the enemy with undue importance; for many of us during the war scribbled roughly-defined areas on the chart used when patrolling, but kept more exact information either among confidential papers or in one's head. Far more accurate

were the German aerial photographs—*provided* they had been taken recently.

Now *Goeben* and *Breslau*, accompanied by destroyers, came steaming down the Straits in the early morning, and, leaving the torpedo craft inside, passed out through the mist till Cape Helles bore about north-east astern. But this was the first mistake. Although the thick atmosphere hid them from British look-outs, they had blundered on to the south-west extremity of our mine-field, and *Goeben*, a few minutes after 6 a.m., was lucky to receive only slight damage. She had been holed on an earlier occasion in the Black Sea much more seriously, so she carried on a little longer to the westward, which brought her well clear of the danger belt. Altering course, she turned up northward, and then to the north-east so as to clear Cape Kephala on Imbros Island. Sending *Breslau* ahead, course was again altered to the north-west from this promontory. It was now 7.40 a.m.,<sup>1</sup> still misty, but at a distance of 2 miles Kephala look-out station could be just observed from the bridge, and fired at.

A little farther beyond, at the island's north-east corner is Kusu Bay, inside whose netted anchorage lay the monitor *Raglan* (Commander Viscount Broome, Lord Kitchener's relative, being senior officer); the smaller monitor, M-28; whilst all night two destroyers, *Tigress* (Lieutenant-Commander J. B. Newill) and *Lizard* (Lieutenant N. A. G. Ohlenschlager), had been patrolling off here. Two drifters, *Supernal* and *Anchor of Hope II*, were patrolling the nets. The mist began to clear, *Lizard* and drifters sighted the enemy, but *Tigress* had already started off westward round the island's northern side, for a reason that will be presently explained.

The Germans wasted no time in sending a rain of shells around *Lizard* (which was only just avoided by smart seamanship), but also on Kusu Bay, striking *Raglan* and M-28 with such accuracy that both were speedily helpless, the former sinking and the latter blowing up, her wreckage causing minor damage to *Lizard*. Altogether this destroyer was straddled by German shells eleven times. What with destroying two monitors, wireless station, lighthouse and two men-of-war, the enemy had wiped out this base in a few minutes, in spite of *Raglan's* attempt to reply. She got off only a few rounds, and then was hit by a shell penetrating her armoured deck, the explosion coming up through her

<sup>1</sup> All times given are East European, i.e. two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time.

turret. About eighty casualties were suffered, and she went down in shallow water, her funnel still showing above the surface. M-28 became a mass of flames, but many of her people were saved. This action had taken place at 10,000 yards.

*Goeben* and *Breslau* now turned southwards in the direction of Tenedos, but, instead of keeping well to the westward of the Dardanelles danger area along the safe course by which they reached Imbros, *Breslau* crashed into the western extremity of our mine-field through steering too far eastward. She thus fouled five of these underwater explosives, and on looking over the side her people could see she was surrounded by "eggs." For any raider hurrying away from the scene of her assault this was a most unpleasant dilemma. It had passed 8.30 a.m. and Mudros, roused by the bad news wirelessly from *Lizard*, would have already sent her forces to sea. Before long the German armoured cruiser might expect to sight the mastheads and grey funnels of British light-cruisers.

*Goeben* tried to get her sister in tow, but struck at least two more mines about 9 a.m. The situation then quickly developed into dramatic crisis: *Breslau*, heeling over and sinking, the sea dotted with hundreds<sup>1</sup> of her crew struggling for life; *Lizard* racing up astern; *Goeben* so badly holed that she was in peril too, and dared not wait; whilst overhead British aircraft arrived to attack. Here, if you please, was an historic picture that deserved the presence of a first-class marine artist. Whether you regard this disaster as just punishment for the monitors' destruction, or sympathise with an unlucky foe, the fact remains that such a sudden reversal of fortune to a pair of adventurous ships somewhat stuns the imagination. One would have preferred that they should have foundered in battle, and succumbed to British projectiles. The lesson to be learned is this: operations of such a risky nature, outside the rival's threshold, should be dependent on accurate information. The trawler's pencilled chart was inadequate, and the aerial photographs not quite up to date. The fatal row of mines had been laid so recently as November 8, 1917. Jellicoe had been right when he stressed the importance of completing this admirably-situated field of tares.

It would seem that the enemy—perhaps because of the mist—had unintentionally got eastward of his intended course. A wise admiral would naturally prefer to use the same track that had shown itself safe on the outward journey, and *Goeben* now realised

<sup>1</sup> *Breslau* had a crew of 550, and she lost two-thirds.

the mistake, for she swung off to the south-west, skirting the mines, and did not turn up towards the Gallipoli peninsula until she supposed a wide berth had been given to that spot where she exploded a mine earlier in the morning.

Having arrived within the Straits once more, she was met by her destroyers, which had been waiting for her, but not before she had struck yet another mine. With a 15° list to port, down by the stern, and her bottom ripped up, the 22,640 tons battle-cruiser slowly steamed between Europe and Asia, past those cliffs and gullies, the forts and hidden batteries that had been shelled by the Anglo-French squadron during the year 1915. Against the strong current of Chanak Narrows she fought her way, nor did the awkward swirls here put her ashore, as months ago they had treated one of our submarines.

But a couple of our aeroplanes were following *Goeben* up the Dardanelles, and at 11.30 a.m. saw her make an error when arriving at Nagara. She touched a sandbank and suddenly came to a stop. One can guess the feelings of everyone aboard at this moment, after so exciting a morning and hectic forenoon. Theoretically she lay there, a perfect gift to our aviators : in any war game she would now be a total loss. But Savory's experience will have convinced us that *Goeben* was a hard nut to crack, and was not going to be finished off from the sky. During the next six days she remained held by the sandbank, time after time our aircraft swooped over her and dropped over fifteen tons of bombs : yet, surprising though it may seem, these created more inconvenience to seamen behind *Goeben's* anti-aircraft guns than actual damage to her hull or deck. Having regard to what this battle-cruiser in one week endured from mines below and bombs above, she will ever be a good advertisement for her Hamburg builders, Blohm & Voss.

In all truth the sortie was associated with strange coincidences. Not only had the flagship *Lord Nelson* chanced to be absent, but the submarine which had been kept waiting for just such an occasion happened temporarily to be on the repair list, wherefore E-14 (lying then at Corfu) was sent, and reached Mudros on the evening of the 23rd. She also had made history when Lieutenant-Commander E. C. Boyle, in 1915, took her up past Nagara into the Sea of Marmara and won the Victoria Cross ; but now Lieutenant-Commander G. S. White was her captain. The latter set forth on a most dangerous mission and gallantly followed the example of his predecessor in the Dardanelles campaign. Working

E-14 through all the subterranean traps, he reached Nagara on the 27th, only to find that *Goeben* was not there: she had been towed off by that obsolete Turkish battleship *Torgut Reis*, which years ago had been purchased from Germany. Unfortunately, on his disappointed return downstream, Lieutenant-Commander White came under a terrible shell-fire from the shore, he was killed and E-14 sunk.

But if *Goeben* got safely back to Constantinople, she had been too heavily damaged to be repaired there, and needed a large dock, which Turkey did not possess. Under the Turkish flag she had steamed during all these months 20,000 miles, whilst *Breslau* had travelled 35,000 miles. The former could take no further part in this war, and the latter would never come home. Bitter grief and anger filled the Turks, but their chances of victory had passed, and they could not hold out much longer. At any rate, Sunday's adventure considerably eased the Aegean situation, and now we could concentrate our energies against the U-boat problem.

Such, then, is the story of the partially accomplished raid. The one British commanding officer who witnessed the whole endeavour from almost the beginning till *Goeben* withdrew into the Straits was Lieutenant Ohlenschlager in the *Lizard*. He has been good enough to write me the following illuminating account, which should have a permanent historical value:

"At the time of the sortie of the *Goeben* and *Breslau* only two destroyers maintained a patrol off the Dardanelles. Originally the patrol had been stronger, but as more and more destroyers were required for convoy duties the number available for the Dardanelles patrol had steadily diminished.

"The method of patrol during daylight hours was for one destroyer to remain to the northward of Imbros—this was known as the Northern Patrol—and the other was responsible for the area between Imbros and Tenedos. The latter was known as the Main Patrol. During the night both destroyers maintained the Northern Patrol in company.

"We were forbidden to go from Main to Northern Patrol by passing to the eastward of Imbros, owing to the possible attentions of the shore batteries, and always had to circumnavigate, practically the entire island, to join our mate some 15 miles away.

"On the morning of January 20th, which was a Sunday, *Tigress*, my senior officer, parted company about 6.30 a.m. and steamed off to the westward to round Imbros and resume Main Patrol. At 7.20 a.m., when I was down in the charthouse, my officer

of the watch sent me a message to say that there was a cruiser in sight off the Dardanelles, and he thought it was the *Breslau*. Now, ever since the evacuation of the Dardanelles every destroyer on patrol had been waiting for this possibility ; but as the weeks had lengthened into months, and the months into more than a year, the possibility had come to seem more and more remote, and we all, I think, regarded a sortie by *Goeben* and *Breslau* as less likely than the abandonment of its bases by the High Sea Fleet and an emergence into the North Sea in force !

“ Frankly, when I received the message it never occurred to me that the long-despaired-of moment had come at last, and I well remember the feeling of irritation with which I got up to go on the bridge to see what my officer of the watch had mistaken for the German cruiser. *Lizard* was about 2 miles from Welcome Point at the time, the morning was fine and clear. To the eastward the familiar outlines of the Gallipoli Peninsula showed dark against the skyline, and in Kusu Bay the two monitors lay at anchor, invested in the usual Sunday morning calm. There was no sign of movement on board either. The only sign of life was the drifter *Supernal* steaming lazily along the line of nets. Cape Kephalo looked just as usual, but just clear of it, where one usually saw an empty horizon, there was, without any doubt at all, *Breslau*, and steering almost straight towards us !

“ Our alarm-gongs blared, the searchlight shutter clattered out the ‘ Challenge,’ and the iron ladders rattled and banged as the hands rushed to their ‘ Action stations ’ ; breech-blocks clanged open and shut ; the ship shook as speed was increased to full. Even as we challenged, a salvo flamed from *Breslau*’s side and *Goeben* showed up about a mile astern of her consort. The unexpected had really happened at last !

While the wireless crackled out the alarm signal on full power, and the dull boom of *Breslau*’s salvo reached us across the water, the searchlight shutter again clattered frantically, calling up the monitors in Kusu Bay. The enemy were still hidden from them by the land. After what seemed an agonising delay we attracted their attention, and signalled that the enemy were in sight steering to the northward. Our Captain (D) had on more than one occasion impressed on us that our chief duty in the event of a sortie of this kind was to remain in contact with the enemy and report his movements, and that we should not risk getting our ships disabled by gunfire without good reasons. Bearing this in mind—somewhat thankfully—and under the impression that the enemy

were endeavouring to escape to the northward, under cover of the land, I turned to steer N. 30° E. at full speed to get ahead of them and maintain contact.

"*Breslau's* salvoes soon began to fall uncomfortably close—the after gun's crew were drenched by the spray from one shot—so although the enemy were still out of range of our guns I gave my First Lieutenant orders to open fire to give the hands something to occupy their attention. Our guns, as far as I can remember, were only sighted up to about 7000 yards, and the enemy were still 5 or 6 miles off, so our fire was not very effective. After *Breslau* had straddled us two or three times, but, luckily, without hitting us, I had commenced to zig-zag—turning each time towards where the previous salvo had fallen—and felt that, barring bad luck, we were fairly safe from suffering damage for the time.

"My sub-lieutenant, who controlled the torpedo armament, was all for an immediate torpedo attack, and kept on hopefully reporting his department 'All ready to attack'; but still under the impression that the German ships were intending to escape, I felt that we should reserve our two precious torpedoes for the night. Meanwhile, the monitors and the enemy had sighted each other and engaged.

"I had felt no particular apprehension for the former, imagining that they would give as good as they got. I was therefore amazed to observe that after being engaged for a matter of minutes only, one or both were burning, and that their firing had ceased. I decided to try and screen them with smoke, pressed the 'smoke' gong, and headed for Kusu Bay, the thick, oily smoke streaming out behind us. As we got near Kusu we could see the whole bay being churned up by falling shells, and I realised that we could only screen for a very few minutes before ourselves becoming a casualty. We ceased making smoke, and almost at the same time the enemy ceased fire. At this time, too, *Tigress*, who of course had turned directly she intercepted my original alarm signal, was observed close in under the land racing back at full speed; I continued toward Kusu and passed under her stern. Fenders were got out ready to go alongside, and the whaler's crew were piped to man their boat. It was a sad sight as we passed through the nets and entered the bay. *Raglan* was sunk with only her bridge and scarred foretop showing above the water, and M-28 was burning fiercely.

"I was about to send away the whaler to render assistance when I saw the net patrol drifters returning; and at the same

time *Tigress*, who had by then been sighted by *Breslau* and was under fire, ordered me to join her. As I turned to steam out of the bay M-28 blew up with a terrible explosion; wreckage—and bodies—fell all round us. When the smoke cleared there was nothing left of her.

"I joined *Tigress* about a quarter to nine to the north-east of Cape Kephala; she was steering to the south-eastward to open up the enemy, who had disappeared from sight round the point. As soon as we came into view *Breslau* again opened fire. But not for long; just after 9 o'clock we saw a large column of smoke and water appear under her stern, followed in a few moments by several more. I thought at first that she was under fire from some ship to the southward of Imbros, then I realised that she was on our outer line of mines. A few minutes later she heeled over and sank, to the cheers of our ships' companies. *Goeben* turned back and stood by for a few minutes then continued her southerly course. We were then about a mile to the north-east of Cape Kephala, with *Goeben* about 10,000 yards to the southward.

"I began to think that we were going to spend the next day or two trailing her round the Mediterranean—and sent down for the steward and ordered some breakfast to be sent up to the bridge, but before it arrived we were in action again. At 9.20 a.m. five vessels emerged from the Dardanelles at high speed on a westerly course. Four were obviously small destroyers, and the fifth looked like an old cruiser. The leading destroyer was a long way ahead of the rest. *Tigress* signalled 'Prepare to engage,' stationed us on her port quarter and increased to full speed, steering south.

"As we went down to the attack we steamed right over the spot where the *Breslau* had sunk half an hour before. The sea was strewn with wreckage and hundreds of survivors were clinging to rafts and spars. They must have thought that we were coming to pick them up, and they must have been bitterly disappointed as we dashed on, despite their frantic shouts and waves. Incidentally, under happier circumstances, it must have been a fine sight for them from water level as we thundered past, cleared for action—guns and tubes trained, the paint blistering on our funnels, brand new White Ensigns at our peaks, and our stern-waves rising in a steep arch astern!

"Five minutes later, at a range of 6000 yards, we engaged. Fire of both our ships was directed on the leading destroyer. The whole enemy force immediately turned sixteen points and bolted for home. The leading destroyer was hit almost at once and



put up a smoke-screen. Our fire was returned by this destroyer, but her shooting was very poor. As soon as we opened fire the shore batteries at Cape Helles opened up on us, and maintained a heavy and fairly accurate fire—we were both lucky to escape being hit. By this time we were uncomfortably close to our six-foot line of mines, so *Tigress* had perforce to break off the action. We altered course to the westward and, as the shore batteries' fire died down, reduced speed. It is still a mystery to me why *Goeben* did not come to the help of the destroyers by engaging us. We had been within comfortable range of her the whole time. We know now that she, too, had struck a mine, but it had caused her very little inconvenience! By the time we had got out of range of the shore batteries *Goeben* had followed the enemy destroyers up the Dardanelles, so there was nothing left for us to do but go and 'pick up the pieces.' We returned on to the mine-field to where *Breslau* had sunk, and lowered boats.

"My motor-boat, in the best destroyer motor-boat tradition, flatly refused to give out even one sputter, so only our whaler went away. *Tigress*' motor-boat, surprisingly, chugged away from her side quite happily with her whaler. We both saw a mine or two in the clear water, so stationed hands round the side with bearing-out spars to push them off if the ship drifted too close! Looking back, I cannot help feeling that we were being a little optimistic! The rescue work took, I think, about an hour, and by 12.30 p.m. all the living had been collected—110 by *Tigress* and 62 by *Lizard*. Unfortunately, many had died of exposure since we had passed them on our way to attack the destroyer division; the corpses far outnumbered those still alive. It is worth noting that all the time we were lying stopped with our boats away, we were within easy range of the shore batteries, who had subjected us to such an accurate fire before, but not a shot was fired at us.

"On her last trip back *Tigress*' motor-boat signalled that she was being followed by a submarine, so I toured round the area at speed, but saw nothing. We had meanwhile received a signal to assume 'Main Patrol,' and by 1.30 p.m. we were peacefully steaming about at 10 knots to the south of Imbros, slightly embarrassed by our number of prisoners. At 6 p.m. orders were received for us to embark *Tigress*' prisoners and return to our parent ship in Mudros. This presented rather a problem, as our prisoners then outnumbered their captors by three to one! However, we packed them all into the fo'c'sle mess-decks, with maxims—and rockets in case the maxims jammed—trained on the one open

door. Poor fellows, they must have acquired a practical sympathy for sardines during our return to Mudros.

"We had one more moment of excitement when one of the German officers requested to be brought before me to announce that the entrance to Mudros had been mined that morning by a submarine! I seem to remember that the sweepers *did* subsequently find that this information was quite correct, but we came up harbour quite unscathed and proceeded alongside *Blenheim* to hand over the prisoners. One of the pleasanter incidents of that day which remains in my memory is the three cheers—or was it *hochs*?—for *Tigress* and *Lizard* called for in English by a German petty officer, just as they left the ship—and very heartily given! That, and the long hot bath and shave I enjoyed in Captain (D)'s bathroom a little later."

I am indebted to another officer for the following telegrams which show how the startling news of this sortie was first made known :

Sent from *Lizard* at 7.35 a.m. :

"Urgent priority *Goeben* and *Breslau* in sight."<sup>1</sup>

Sent from *Lizard* at 8.10 a.m. :

"*Goeben* and *Breslau* course north-west, speed 20 knots."

This was followed at 8.48 by information that the enemy was steering south-west. Meanwhile Admiral Hayes-Sadler had received the news and wirelessly that *Agamemnon* with two destroyers and *Foresight* were to meet *Lord Nelson* 10 miles south of Cape Paliuri at 2 p.m. (G.M.T.) to-day. *Foresight*, however, would not have steam till a little later, whilst M-18 was under repair and had to plead, "Regret shall not have steam for twenty-four hours as my funnel is on board the *Reliance*."

At 9.6 a.m. *Tigress* sent :

"*Breslau* sinking."

At 10.15 a.m. *Tigress* wirelessly :

"*Goeben* and destroyers returned."

An officer in the *Lowestoft* tells me that the signal to raise steam for full speed reached her at 8 a.m. She went out in company with *Agamemnon* and *Skirmisher*, and heard firing, followed later by *Foresight*, but they had not been out long before the latest news completely altered the situation and they were ordered back. When the survivors were brought into Mudros some interesting facts began to accumulate, viz., that Tenedos

<sup>1</sup> The prearranged signal for months to convey this information had been the one word "GOBLO."

(not Mudrós) was to have been attacked after Imbros, and then the two raiders were to go back up the Dardanelles. It was *Breslau's* Gunnery Officer who told Lieutenant-Commander Ohlenschlager about the aerial photographs and that the fatal lines of mines were not shown.

At the receipt of *Lizard's* first warning news it certainly looked as if the enemy was bound out on a more ambitious excursion. Admiral Sir Somerset Gough-Calthorpe, on the 23rd, hurried from Malta at 23 knots in the destroyer *Cameleon* as far as Syra,<sup>1</sup> and at midnight of the 23rd–24th *Lowestoft* left Mudros under sealed orders to fetch him. The Admiralty were most anxious that *Goeben* should be not allowed to escape again, but before the Commander-in-Chief's arrival at Mudros on Friday 25th, the aeroplanes had been very busy over the German battle-cruiser. On the night of the 22nd they dropped one bomb on her fore-bridge, and one on a tug at her port side. At that position had been moored a 6000-tons steamer to save *Goeben* from torpedo attack, so that in any case E-14 would have had a difficult if not impossible task. Fog interfered with the aircraft, but two more hits—making fourteen so far—were registered by them on the night of the 25th, and finally a seaplane dropped a torpedo which exploded.

If the R.N.A.S. and everyone else were unhappy that *Goeben* had eluded them, another disappointment occurred on the same day of the sortie. The armed boarding steamer *Louvain* on her way to Mudros was torpedoed and sunk. She happened to be carrying, among other items, money for paying the *Lowestoft's* crew, together with 1900 bags of mails and parcels, many an officer and man losing their Christmas presents. Ten days later Moraht in U-64, when 40 miles east-north-east of Malta, sank the Atlantic transport liner *Minnetonka*. So the unseen enemy was still very actively contending.

Early in February *Lowestoft* was sent to Taranto to fetch the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Eric Geddes, who made a tour of Mediterranean bases and, with the direct methods of a business man, shook things up at Malta and Mudros, "turning people inside out" as one officer puts it. Perhaps after all the wearying war months staleness had begun to threaten, routine tended to deaden minds, and a fresh outside influence could be welcomed as a tonic. An interesting episode occurred during the return voyage from the Aegean towards Taranto. On the 22nd at 2.30 p.m. after rounding Cape Matapan, wind and sea got up,

<sup>1</sup> An Aegean island among the Cyclades group.

so the cruiser eased down to 17 knots because of the escorting destroyer. Captain Wardle, after a night on deck, was below in his cabin having a rest when the officer-of-the-watch reported down the voice-pipe a submarine ahead. The Captain rushed out and ordered "Full ahead! Hard aport!" The submarine had pretended she was a trawler with a sail up, and now dived quickly whilst the destroyer made for the spot where last seen. For a minute or two things were quite exciting, and it would have been a fine catch for the enemy should he sink *Lowestoft* and take the First Lord prisoner. A howl of joy would have been made on the German wireless.

Captain Wardle, conscious of having so distinguished a guest on board, knew that the primary duty was the latter's protection, and the destroyer could do the attacking. Now, when *Lowestoft's* commanding officer sent down to inform the First Lord, the latter immediately came up.

"Where is she?" he demanded as he looked across the waves. "Did you fight her?"

"No, sir," answered the Captain. "Certainly not, with you on board. I have turned away and gone full speed."

The First Lord said nothing, and moved off for a minute. Then he came back and said: "I suppose you were right—in fact you *were* right. But it is the first time I have been treated as a damned old woman!"

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### VICTORY

THE inevitable trouble which always ripens as a result of ships and men rotting in port now manifested itself during February. The Austrian Navy, excepting a few runs out and home, plus some adventures by the submarines, had done little enough, so stagnation afforded idle men opportunity to brood and then to plot. That culminated in a sailor's revolution at Cattaro this month, and things looked ugly. But the Austrians and Germans had never fraternised over much, and U-35 (de la Perière) as well as other German submarines were largely instrumental in fighting down a movement which would, however, show itself again later. In March 1918 de la Perière, having given up command of his famous submarine, went by land to Germany and took over U-139. He had sunk half a million tons of shipping in the Mediterranean since his arrival during December 1915, and had been a veritable scourge. Unquestionably his name heads the list of Germany's most successful U-boat captains, but his narrow escapes from death were several, and if his removal from the Latin Lake at this period seemed likely to weaken the Adriatic flotilla, perhaps it were better for his own preservation. Numbers of his fellow submarine officers were being sent to their doom by the Allies' greater efficiency ; although the mines found off such places as Marseilles, Malta, Alexandria, and in different parts of the Aegean, emphasised the old dangers that threatened our shipping.

On March 9 Rear-Admiral (late Commodore) A. W. Heneage, who had been in charge of the Otranto drifters and M.L.'s, now became the senior British naval officer in Italy, whilst Commodore W. A. H. Kelly took command of the British Adriatic Force with headquarters at Brindisi. Under him were the 8th Light Cruiser Squadron, the Adriatic monitors ; the Otranto Barrage, including destroyers, submarines, trawlers, drifters, and aircraft. Both these officers were under Admiral Sir Somerset Gough-Calthorpe at Malta ; but Commodore Kelly was under Admiral Conte di

Revel, the Italian Commander-in-Chief's, orders in respect of the cruisers and monitors.

A more vigorous offensive was now to be made against submarines in the Otranto Straits, which comprised (1) the Mobile Barrage of sloops, destroyers, M.L.'s, drifters, submarines; (2) the Fixed Barrage of the Otranto-Fano nets, which after various experiments began to be laid on April 26 from a position 7 miles east of Cape Otranto. Each net was 100 yards long with two mines, necessary buoyancy being acquired by those round glass bottles so long used by British drifters. During the next five months, save for interruptions by bad weather, this formidable barrier went steadily on to completion. Information came in by May that U-boat captains were already feeling their actions cramped by our convoy systems; and very shortly this Otranto barrage with destroyers patrolling to the north, drifters lining the south, and M.L.'s extensively dashing about in between, was to become that serious menace which should have existed three years earlier.<sup>1</sup> There were now forty-one of these motor craft based on Gallipoli, and several had been fitted with wireless. But the wooden drifters had become so worm-eaten that sixteen of them left for England on March 9 and sixteen steel drifters from home replaced them two days later. Nevertheless the wooden drifter *Clare and Alice*, which had remained out, developed such a bad lead, owing to the bottom planking being eaten, that whilst patrolling the barrage on May 26 she sank, the actual position being Lat. 40° 3' N., Long. 19° 48' E.

The first signs of an approach towards the end of hostilities was on March 15, when Roumania (never a satisfactory ally) signed a peace treaty. But in April Germany was so expectant of a long war that a large constructive programme of submarines was begun at Pola and Cattaro: in fact the Pyovica docks near Cattaro Bay had only been completed just before the war came to an end and Austrian ports must be evacuated. Germany's Adriatic boats were at their greatest number in September 1917, though by the following June had become far fewer.

One of them had an exciting time on the night of April 18 when M.L. 168 (Lieutenant F. Paget, R.N.V.R.), patrolling Otranto Straits in Lat. 40° N., Long. 19° E., soon after 10 p.m. sighted a large U-boat a hundred yards ahead steering south on

<sup>1</sup> The German Captain Gayer has stated that only when the British took over these Straits from the Italians did the obstruction for the first time become effective.

the surface. The M.L. fired a 13-pounder shell which burst on the enemy's hull fifteen feet forward of the conning-tower as the German was diving. Lieutenant Paget then, at 18 knots, rushed up to the smooth patch where the submarine had disappeared and dropped a depth-charge some hundred feet just ahead, and then a second which caused a very heavy explosion. A black object resembling a conning-tower half a minute later was sighted by M.L. 190, and remained in sight for several seconds before listing over and disappearing. Nothing further could be heard on the hydrophone, so that if the enemy was not sunk, at least she must have been seriously damaged and hidden herself below the water for some time.

A few weeks previously two other encounters had taken place in the Adriatic. The first concerned the French submarine *Bernouilli* (390 tons). This adventurous boat in April 1915 had essayed to get through into the Sea of Marmara as some of our daring E-class had succeeded; but *Bernouilli's* electric power was too restricted. Her batteries became exhausted against the Dardanelles strong current, and she had to return. On February 13, 1918, an enemy submarine sank her after leaving Brindisi, but eight days later the Italian destroyer *Airone* sank the Austrian submarine U-XXIII (one of the smaller boats and launched in 1916) along the Brindisi-Valona transport line which was a favourite area for that nation's boats, and much safer than having to penetrate the Otranto Straits' southern end.

Unfortunately by one of those regrettable accidents which were so difficult to avoid, where a submarine of the Allies resembled that of the enemy, H.M. Submarine H-1 sank the Italian H-5. This happened on April 17. Much more satisfactory was the incident of April 21 when one of the Gibraltar motor launches distinguished herself. Just before 4 a.m. M.L. 413 (Lieutenant Joseph S. Bell, R.N.V.R.) was  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles east of Almina Point (Ceuta) keeping hydrophone watch, when she heard sounds of a motor craft proceeding at high speed, and a few moments afterwards observed a large bow wave approaching from the westward. Lieutenant Bell went ahead at full speed and switched on his navigation lights to avoid a collision. Two minutes later the stranger turned out to be a submarine on the surface, who quickly altered course and crossed the M.L.'s bows at thirty feet distance and then—evidently thoroughly scared—dived. The M.L. next followed in her wake and dropped four depth-charges which were most effective, for at 4.5 a.m. Lieutenant Bell stopped, listened

and heard nothing till Torpedo boat 92 came along later. The night gradually passed, and at daybreak quantities of oil and four pieces of wood were picked up. Now this was not one of those examples where the enemy feigned destruction, but a genuine "kill." Two bits of woodwork were heavy, white pine, creosoted and recessed, apparently used for the ammunition. One piece of deal was painted white on one side, and black on the other. Two pieces of varnished mahogany fitted with bright hinges were evidently part of a cabin door. An interesting detail was that this door had been much bruised and splintered with many small fragments of metal embedded in it. Thus UB-71, who had just entered the Straits from Germany, definitely perished, and Lieutenant Bell won the Distinguished Service Cross.

It was nearly a year since the Otranto Straits had been raided by the Austrians on May 15, 1917, nor had there been necessity to swoop down again; for the passage had been so open until recently. But now the fixed and mobile barrages had begun to cause a new and more formidable inconvenience, and evidently Lieutenant Paget's enemy had got home to Cattaro, so battered, so angry, so frightened, that the Austrians must do something and again make a night attack. It took place on April 22, 1918, but Commodore Kelly's British destroyers were ready. Here is the first-hand story from one of the chief participants.<sup>1</sup>

The advanced destroyer patrol to-night consisted of six units, disposed in subdivisions along the line running across the Straits from Missipezza (which is on the Italian coast just above Otranto), this line going through that spot where the drifter *Restore* had many months previously been sunk and U-boats frequently been observed. Commodore Kelly's two subdivisions were 10 miles apart—eastern, central, western—but only the western destroyers (*Jackal* and *Hornet*) enter into the story.

At 9.25 p.m. (G.M.T.) the *Jackal* (Lieutenant-Commander A. M. Roberts, R.N., to whom I am under obligation for these facts) was steaming west at 12 knots when about 5 miles off to the north five Austrian destroyers were sighted coming south in line abreast. After the latter had been challenged for recognition lights (no reply forthcoming), the Austrians altered course to about south-west and opened fire with all guns. *Jackal* and

<sup>1</sup> Gallant and modest naval officers do not always appreciate the historical value which belongs to documents written immediately after some important naval occasion. The particular records here relied upon had been placed in a box and lost for many years. They were finally discovered put away in a bank, and have been brought forth specially for the present publication.



*Hornet* replied, increased to full speed, and altered course through west to south in order to draw the enemy further south in accordance with standing orders. Meanwhile both British destroyers had suffered, *Hornet* being hit by a shell in her engine or boiler-room, and she dropped out of the action. *Jackal's* mainmast and wireless aerial came down with a crash.

It would seem that the enemy were quite surprised by this opposition and very soon had enough : all chance of raiding the mobile barrage being considered impossible. Turning to star-board, the Austrians (whose leading ship had been twice hit under the bridge by *Jackal*) went back to the north followed by *Jackal* at full speed, and at 9.55 p.m. the enemy were running back home in single-line-ahead. It was a pretty plucky thing for one destroyer to chase five, firing her foremost 4-inch at them ; but this caused the Austrians to open out fan-wise, making it impossible to follow their movements. The range had been 6000 yards and the escapers' course settled down to north-north-east, but at 12.20 a.m. they disappeared out of sight.

*Jackal* at the opening of this action had been struck by three shells almost immediately and simultaneously. One entered and burst in the wardroom, wrecking it, filling it with fumes, and minor damage was done by splinters. A second shell caused further damage, and killed an A.B. It was the third shell which carried away the mainmast, but a petty officer and a couple of A.B.'s cleared away the wreckage and soon rigged the aerial on the platform of the high-angle gun, although they were exposed to heavy fire. Lieutenant-Commander Roberts could therefore at 10.20 wireless her position to the Commodore, and she further indicated where she was by firing green rockets.

The other destroyers now joined her, and the five continued to chase the enemy's five ; but at 1.10 a.m. the Commodore ordered the chasers back to the patrol. It was believed that the raiders had probably taken shelter inside their mine-field at Durazzo, wherefore the Commodore despatched a British bombing squadron of the R.A.F. during the forenoon of the 23rd, and a ton of explosives rained down over this unfortunate town. Indecisive though the destroyer action in one sense may appear to have terminated, it was a British victory, because the Austrians retreated from an inferior force and were thwarted of their intention to attack the drifters and M.L.'s. Thus the completion of the fixed barrage could go forward, and the U-boats' navigation be made more difficult than ever.

If deterioration of morale had set in ashore both among Germans and Austrians, defeat of the U-boats at sea was foreshadowed. On May 8 the British destroyer *Basilisk* with the United States *Lydonia* was escorting a convoy, and just before 6 p.m. they were 80 miles north of Algiers when the S.S. *Ingleside* received a torpedo and sank with the loss of eleven lives. *Basilisk*, who was steaming on *Ingleside's* port quarter, saw the missile's track crossing from port to starboard, so put her helm hard a-starboard and dropped three depth-charges over the submarine's estimated position. The *Lydonia* did the same. A large brown patch of oil then rose and covered the water, and forty seconds later vibrations were felt on the bridge and in the engine-room of *Basilisk*: the submarine bumped along the hull and never came up again. Thus one more new enemy on the way to Cattaro never gained her destination: for this was UB-70, which had left Germany for the Adriatic on April 15. As if "to make it a day," H.M.S. *Wallflower*, whilst escorting a convoy between Sicily and Malta, on the way from Gibraltar to Alexandria, was too quick for U-32 and sent her to the bottom. Thus May 8 well proved how valuable that time-honoured but long-delayed convoy principle could be, not only as defence but for offence.

Only eight days later followed a simple little story. UC-35 (Lieutenant Korsch), which could carry eighteen mines, had laid twelve of them off Villefranche on the night of the 7th, and the remaining six next day off Cannes. Thus relieved, she cruised about on the shipping routes looking for prizes. About 8 a.m. of the 17th she had shifted to the west coast of Sardinia when she sighted two sailing vessels and a third which she took for an ordinary little steamer of no value, though actually the French patrol trawler *Ailly*. Korsch had disguised his boat with a sail, and opened fire. To his surprise *Ailly* at once replied, hitting the submarine on her port side, whilst a second shell burst in the conning-tower, killing or seriously wounding the captain and several men. Orders were then given to abandon ship, and she sank for the last occasion, whereupon *Ailly* came along and rescued the five survivors.

Nor does that conclude the list. On the 15th U-39 had been depth-charged by two American vessels, and H.M. Yacht *Venetia*, whilst escorting a convoy from Gibraltar to Bizerta. This was one of the first German submarines ever to reach the Mediterranean, and the reader will not have forgotten that Forstmann, who brought her out, sank the drifter *Restore*. He had some time

ago taken over a new command, to be succeeded by Lieutenant Metzger. This boat was not destroyed, but so grave were her injuries that on May 18 she had to enter Cartagena, where the Spaniards saw to her internment and that she did not escape.

But we must mention yet another. Just after 11 p.m. on May 23 the British submarine H-4 (Lieutenant Oliver North) was patrolling to the westward of San Giovanni di Medua but athwart the track along which a U-boat would be likely to pass when coming to or from Cattaro. She sighted UB-52 on the port bow steering north by west and approached the German at full speed. The latter altered course to starboard, but at 11.14 p.m. Lieutenant North fired two torpedoes from a distance of 250 yards, and both hit, UB-52 sinking in fifteen seconds. Two survivors were picked up, of whom one was Lieutenant Launburg her captain, the other being Navigating Warrant Officer Klein. She had left Cattaro on April 28, and now had almost got back—indeed she should have reached home before dawn to-morrow since only about 35 miles had still to be covered. Launburg was actually down below making preparations for going ashore, and Petty Officer Wehr was on watch. A very obvious lesson is to be learnt from this.

Whereas only two Mediterranean U-boats had been sunk in the whole of 1917, already five had been wiped off the list during May 1918 solely. What we needed above all things was an increase of patrols, but these were not procurable from England. Luckily, however, America, after entering the war, had begun to construct 350 motor patrol vessels, which became known as "Sub-chasers." Measuring 110 feet long, displacing about 60 tons, they were propelled by gasoline engines, and could do 16 knots. The armament was one 3-inch gun. Now some of these reached Gibraltar on May 8, 1918, but the first six destined to patrol the Otranto barrage and to be based on Corfu arrived at the latter island on June 5. By the month's end they were joined by twenty-one more. This barrage, as we have perceived, consisted of a northern destroyer line as advanced scouts, with the various lines of drifters and M.L.'s to the south. Among the latter were the "chasers" now to work. Their exact position varied from time to time; sometimes they operated by themselves, at others they co-operated with the fishing craft, most of their time being spent drifting with the current listening with their hydrophones. The whole barrage area from north to south being an area of 35 miles, there remained ample space for all

these units, but normally twelve "chasers" were maintaining their line. Their work, if unmarked by any outstanding spectacular success, was very valuable, and after Austria collapsed they participated in the bombardment of Durazzo, besides preserving order on the Dalmatian coast. Off Gibraltar, where the current continually runs eastward steadily, they were to perform useful service in the last five days of hostilities when nervous U-boats were seeking to escape back to Germany out of the Mediterranean.

If the Italian battleships exercised a very silent pressure, without opportunity for a fleet action, their motor-boats were able to perform some of the most brilliant exhibitions of personal bravery the Adriatic ever witnessed. The first of these boats came to be employed in May 1916, but a faster type was then evolved about the size of our C.M.B.'s. Measuring 42 feet long and displacing 12 tons, known as M.A.S. (Motor-Boats Anti-Submarine), they were manned by gallant adventurers who turned these letters into inspiration: M.A.S.—"Memento Audere Semper" ("Remember to be daring all the time"). Armed with a couple of torpedoes, possessing a speed of 24 knots, they were valuable in watching the routes from Pola, Cattaro, Durazzo by night, visiting the Dalmatian islands; landing during the dark hours on the Austrian coast, or even by day impudently towing enemy seaplanes off from the buoys.

The first important of these raids, however, was made by the Italian torpedo-boat No. 24 on May 29, 1916, when she dashed into Trieste soon after midnight. Then on June 7 the two M.A.S. boats Nos. 5 and 7 penetrated the Durazzo defences, and torpedoed a steamer full of supplies for the Austrian Army. Five days later Commander Ciano had the nerve to take the destroyer *Zeffiro* into Parenzo harbour (30 miles below Trieste), go alongside the quay, and steal one of the policemen, who thought them to be Austrians, after which Ciano went off at high speed, stopping only to bombard the place at 800 yards. Two more steamers at Durazzo were torpedoed in June.

Meanwhile the M.A.S. boats were being built in greater numbers and gaining increased efficiency. Not less than about 400 were in service before the war ended, and Admiral di Revel, the Italian Commander-in-Chief since February 1917, regarded them with enthusiasm. Owing to limitations of space it is quite impossible here to do more than hint at some of the incredible adventures which keen young officers and men experienced in

these boats.<sup>1</sup> One of the most daring was Lieutenant Luigi Rizzo, formerly master of a merchant ship. This officer in M.A.S. No. 9, taking with him No. 13, left Venice on the night of December 9 and went over towards Trieste, where Rizzo managed to sink the Austrian battleship *Wien*. The most extraordinary feat was that by Lieutenant-Commander A. Pellegrini, who on the night of May 13, 1918, in a kind of marine adaptation of the military "tank" named the *Grillo*, escorted by an M.A.S., left Venice for Pola. She succeeded in crashing through most of the entangling harbour defences, till at the last she was foiled and had to be sunk voluntarily rather than be surrendered.

This unsettling incident so impressed the Austrian Commander-in-Chief that he decided to withdraw his battle fleet from Pola to Cattaro, which would be safer. A further reason for this rare appearance at sea was in order to be within striking distance of the Otranto Straits. For the German Admiralty had now learnt of the barrage being so extremely difficult, that U-boats could scarcely get through. The last raid by five Austrian destroyers had been repulsed, wherefore it must be attempted again with the support of four battleships. Thus by gradual stages the Straits barrage had improved till it alone was largely responsible for rousing to activity the enemy's crack quartette that had lain in somnolence nearly four useless years. One could almost foresee that this must come eventually, for the Germans were fighting a losing battle and their submarines still hoped to win the race by starving us of shipping. At all costs, therefore, the Otranto gate *must* be kept open. On the other hand, the appearance of four battleships would be very grave for us—not merely for the mobile barrage, but for the light cruisers that would rush out of Brindisi into a trap. No British battleships could come out, since *Queen* had long ago become a depot, and it would take time for the Italians to emerge from Taranto. The blow would have been struck and the enemy be on his way home.

The date selected for this onslaught by Austria's battle squadron, light cruiser squadron, and destroyers was June 11, 1918, when the first-mentioned were to be placed under way between Brindisi and Valona. Our pursuing destroyers and light cruisers would thus quickly find themselves up against a steel wall. From Pola to Cattaro is roughly 300 miles, but most of the passage could be made within that wonderful series of islands off the Croatian and Dalmatian coasts. What better protection by night?

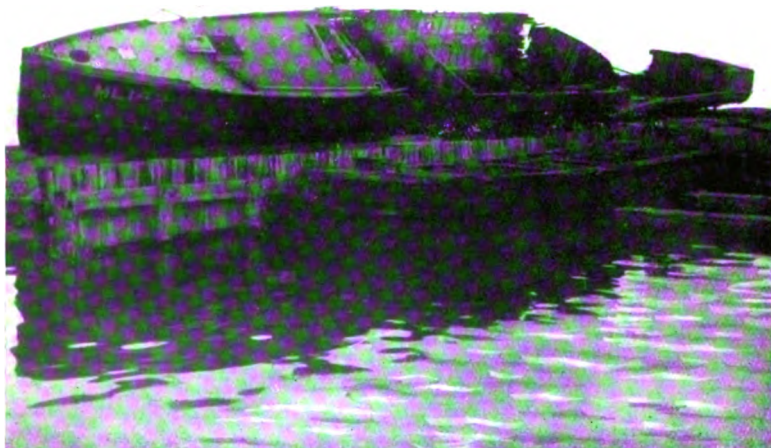
<sup>1</sup> The subject is fully treated in my *Gallant Gentlemen*.

Of the four battleships the *Szent Istvan* and *Tegetthof* with a screen of ten destroyers were to leave Pola on June 9 at 9.45 p.m., whilst the *Viribus Unitis* and *Prinz Eugen* with another destroyer flotilla were to follow a few hours later.

But the Austrians made a muddle about opening the Pola boom defence and switching on the leading lights, so that *Szent Istvan* and *Tegetthof* were delayed three-quarters of an hour. (Imagine if that had happened to Beatty's battle-cruisers setting out from the Firth of Forth on their 10 p.m. enterprises !) Those forty-five minutes were fatal, for it meant so much less protective darkness, dawn on June 10 being about 3.30. It so happened that Rizzo with his two M.A.S. had been cruising between the islands of Premuda and Gruitza and was just going back to Ancona when at 3.15 a.m. he sighted a large cloud of smoke from the Austrians, and presently *Szent Istvan* grew into shape. When the latter was 900 yards away Rizzo dashed in, fired two torpedoes, both hitting, and in spite of *Tegetthof's* efforts to get her in tow she sank. Austria's newest and best ship had thus succumbed to a tiny little motor-boat.

And the result ?

The fleet was recalled to Pola, the Otranto raid never came off, the barrage marched towards its perfection, and the Austrian battleships never put to sea again during the war. On June 11, the very day that should have witnessed the raid, *Moraht* in U-64 left Cattaro, met UC-53 about 150 miles east of Malta and gave her some spare parts. On the afternoon of the 17th she was in the Cape Bon area and sighted a convoy, of which she sank the S.S. *Kandy* by torpedo. But *Moraht* foolishly remained at periscope draught to observe results and was depth-charged by H.M. Sloop *Lychnis*, putting out some of her lights, damaging her after hydroplanes and jamming her steering rudder, besides allowing water to enter by the forward hatch. She got out of control, tried to escape on the surface, but was immediately shelled by the sloop as well as the trawler *Partridge II* : the submarine had come up amid the convoy ! She then made a stern dive ejecting *Moraht* and four others—the captain having an exciting time after being drawn down to 40 feet and his feet getting caught in the jumping wires. Five prisoners were taken out of the forty-one, *Moraht* having the narrowest escape as he came up utterly exhausted and about to go down for the third time. He it was who had destroyed 170,000 tons of shipping, inclusive of the French battleship *Danton* on March 8, 1917,



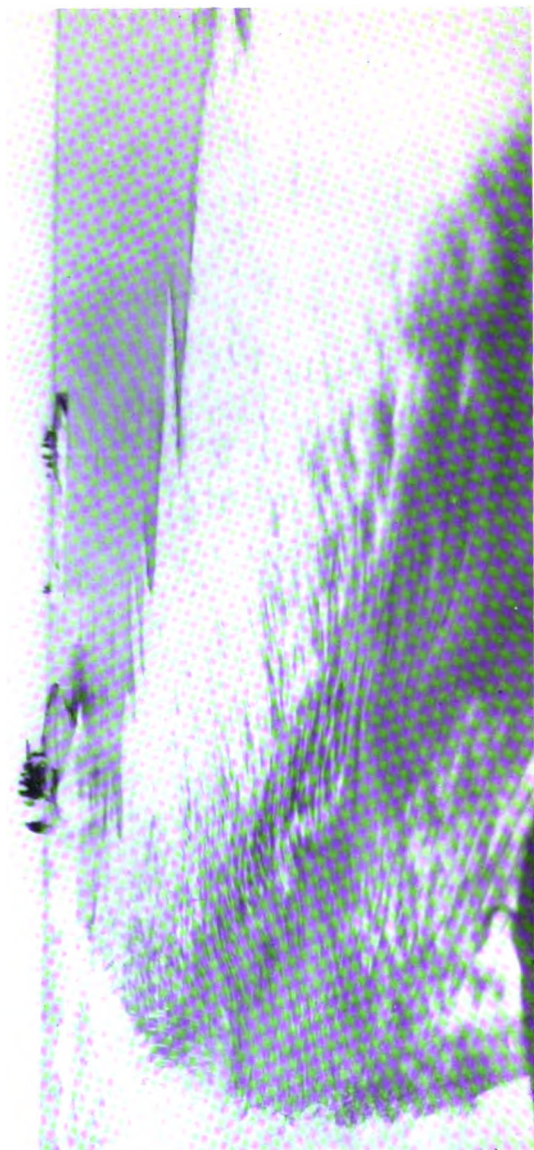
#### AFTER THE FIRE

The hull of an Adriatic motor launch burnt out.



#### THE ITALIAN NAVAL "TANK" *GRILLO*

This was the strange craft in which Lieut.-Commander A. Pellegrini on the night of May 13, 1918, worked his way into Pola Harbour.



*Courtesy of Italian Government*

ITALIAN SUBMARINE CHASERS  
Proceeding at high speed.



for which he received the order "Pour le Mérite," corresponding to our Victoria Cross.

The removal of this most successful officer was another heavy blow to the enemy, and some of his, as well as his crew's, remarks are worthy of note : (1) The smoke of ships was of great assistance to the U-boat, but the Allies had recently improved in this respect ; (2) our depth-charge had a considerable moral effect, making the personnel most nervous and jumpy ; (3) the Otranto Barrage had now become very difficult. It was easier to get through during bad weather.

By the month of July Germany had the following submarine flotilla in the Mediterranean :

U-CLASS	UB-CLASS	UC-CLASS
33	8 (handed over to Bulgaria)	20
34	14	22
35	42	23
38	48	25
47	49	27
63	50	34
65	51	37
72	53	52
73	68	53
	105	54
	128	67
		73
		74

TOTAL 33.

Of these the enemy employed UC-20, UC-73, and UB-128 as transports. The first two were specially fitted to carry rifles, shells and small arms ammunition from Austria to the North African coast, for which purpose the mine-tubes had been removed. On the return voyage they brought back such articles as skins and saddles. If it be asked why the enemy possessed so few submarines, the answer is that normally it took two years to build one of the larger type and a year for the smaller ; but that the needful repairs to the High Sea Fleet after the Battle of Jutland, and the building of numerous mine-sweepers, made it impossible to take workmen away for construction of U-boats.

As the summer of 1918 waned, so did the enemy's chances with remarkable consistency. In the beginning of August the above list already was shortened by one. UB-53 had left Pola at 6.30 p.m.

on August 1 for the Mediterranean, at a time when the spirit of unrest in the Austrian base was dormant rather than dead ; but the German submarine crews at Pola (who were accommodated in two old men-of-war, a sailing ship, and an Austrian-Lloyd liner) despised the Austrians as only good enough for paint-scraping. In any case just now it was better for crews to be at sea away from shore influences. Now UB-53 had set out from Kiel about eight months ago and reached Cattaro at the beginning of November, whence she went up to Pola, and among her crew was Erich Reich (Boatswain's Mate) who served first in the raider *Emden*, and afterwards got away in the *Ayesha*.

About 5 p.m. of August 3 UB-53 (Lieutenant-Commander Sprenger) whilst submerged fouled the mine-nets of Otranto Fixed Barrage. Two mines exploded violently on the starboard side aft, and it is worth noting that Sprenger had taken his boat down to a depth varying from 98 feet to 131 feet, doing about  $3\frac{1}{4}$  knots which was about half his full speed when under water. So badly was his hull injured that he rose to the surface, abandoned ship, having thrown confidential papers into the sea. He caused four explosive charges to be placed in the engine-room and at 5.30 p.m. the crew of thirty-five took to the water. Not till 9 p.m. were twenty-seven sighted by H.M.S. *Martin* (a destroyer) in her searchlight rays after hearing a shout : the other eight perished.

As against this loss, the French submarine *Circé* which had sunk UC-24 (previously narrated) was destroyed by U-47's torpedo in the Adriatic off Cape Rodoni. This occurred on August 20, and now events began to follow with startling sequence. At the end of September Bulgaria had withdrawn from the war, on October 2 Durazzo's base was shelled by the Allies, but two days later the enemy's submarines proved that a convoy for a U-boat was still like a candle to a moth. It was at 4.35 a.m. of October 4, to the eastward of Malta, that UB-68 was about to attack a convoy escorted by H.M. Sloop *Snaphdragon*, but barely had the German broken surface than she received a fierce reception with the shells of several ships. The third round from *Snaphdragon's* foremost gun struck the submarine's hull, and two more her conning-tower, so that the enemy began to sink, her crew in the last few minutes endeavouring to launch their collapsible boat. They were picked up by the sloop.

But Austria, pivoted on a dangerous peak ; Germany herself on the verge of collapse ; and Turkey in the same plight ; made

October a most memorable month. On land the Salonika adventure after a disappointing period now had attained victory, thanks largely to the determined dash of French and Serbian troops : only the Armistice prevented the German and Bulgarian armies from utter disaster. Most precarious had become the future of Germany's Mediterranean flotillas. Their very existence depended on having safe bases, but Austria could no longer guarantee that essential ; wherefore the best boats must hurry home, before too late, and the others be destroyed.

On October 28 the following fifteen left Cattaro for the long and boisterous autumn trip to the North Sea. The dismal procession of U-34, 35, 38, 63 ; of UB-49, 50, 51, 105, 128 ; as well as UC-20, 22, 27, 52, 67, and 73 ; was symbolic of the Central Powers' defeat after a terrific struggle. The contrast between the enemy's harassing warfare against the shipping routes and this dolorous retreat is one of the most significant in all naval history, rivalled only by the lines of surrendered units a few weeks later at Harwich. These fifteen, which included some of the pioneers, now sought to get through Gibraltar Straits independently and individually. That would be the supreme difficulty of all their war tasks, for they knew that every available destroyer, torpedo-boat, M.L., chaser, and perhaps an odd Q-ship would be patrolling the Gibraltar neck. This would have to be negotiated by night, with an adverse current, and hull trimmed ready for a crash dive. Before evacuating the Adriatic the Germans destroyed at Pola or Cattaro U-47, 65, 72, 73 ; also UB-48, 129 ; and UC-25, 34, 53, 54.

Of the fifteen which departed from the Adriatic no fewer than thirteen got through Gibraltar Straits into the Atlantic swell. When we consider that the defile was alive with vessels, and their propellers could be heard everywhere in the channel separating Europe from Africa, this escape was a remarkable achievement. Nothing so clearly indicates the utter impossibility of closing Straits except by a deep barrage of fixed deep nets, or shallow mine-fields such as were proving efficacious in the Dover Straits. U-35 interned herself at Barcelona, and it must have broken de la Perière's heart when he learnt this of his old command. That veteran U-34 (which the reader will recollect had been brought to the Mediterranean by Rücker, but now commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Johannes Klasing) on the night of November 8-9 was just about to get through the last stage when the Gibraltar M.L. 155 spotted her off Almina Point

and dropped depth-charges on her. Two minutes later arrived the Q-ship *Privet*, who shelled her and dropped depth-charges also. Thus by a curious coincidence U-34 and 35, the first two German submarines (excepting Hersing's U-21, which had been sent to deal with men-of-war) to motor out into the Mediterranean, were also the last to be stopped from leaving that sea. It is true that UC-74 was interned at Barcelona, but she happened to have been patrolling when the great withdrawal commenced.

Captain (at that time Lieutenant-Commander) W. Ward Hunt, who was in charge of the Gibraltar Patrol, tells me that when U-34 was sunk she happened to be accompanied by another submarine, who dived into obscurity. She "further succeeded in passing through the patrol line of twenty United States chasers which I had stationed in the western parts of the Straits. The result of her escape was most unfortunate." For this UB-50 had barely got round the corner into the Atlantic than she torpedoed H.M.S. *Britannia* off Cape Spartel on November 9 at dawn. All the ship's company were taken off the battleship except about fifty who died as a result of gas poisoning. Two days later was signed the Armistice with Germany.

Meanwhile the Adriatic situation ended with a strange anticlimax. On the night of October 31 two more daring Italian officers with a miniature torpedo-like boat worked their way into Pola harbour and managed to sink the "Dreadnought" battleship *Viribus Unitis*. Next morning this amazing achievement of cleverness and sheer bravery turned out to be quite unnecessary, for the Austrian Emperor had that day made over the Austro-Hungarian Fleet to the Jugo-Slav National Council, and the Imperial Navy did not exist.<sup>1</sup>

So, too, the long-drawn-out Dardanelles dilemma was solved when an armistice was signed with Turkey on October 30 at Mudros. Two days later a force of one kite-balloon ship, five twin-screw sweepers, fourteen trawlers, eight drifters, and three M.L.'s began to clear a passage for the Allied Fleet. First they swept across our own mine-field in which *Breslau* came to grief, thence up the Dardanelles through those areas which had been so dangerous to our submarines in 1915, and finally a channel for the Fleet had been freed all the way from Mudros to the Sea of Marmara, though before the whole job was complete more than one auxiliary vessel blew up on a mine.

<sup>1</sup> Further details of this incredible adventure will be found in Chapter XII of my *Gallant Gentlemen*.

Several hundreds of these floating dangers were accounted for, and on November 12 the triumphal Allied Fleet, led by the British Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Sir Somerset Gough-Calthorpe, flying his flag in H.M.S. *Superb*, made their historic progress. The British squadron of four battleships—*Superb*, *Temeraire*, *Lord Nelson*, and *Agamemnon*—was preceded at first by the light cruisers and followed by French, Italian, and Greek divisions ; destroyers screening.

The unrolling sights of those scenes which changed at every mile or two seemed an epitome of four years' campaign viewed in reverse sequence. The north-east corner of Imbros revealed the tripod mast of the tragic *Raglan* upright on an even keel. Yonder was Anzac Beach, and the *River Clyde* still survived. It was strange to pass Sed-del-Bahr and De Tott's battery without being shelled, but now Dardanus showed up—Dardanus whose guns for ever annoyed the Anglo-French Fleet on that memorable occasion when our ships had tried to bombard their way through. Kephez Bay, and the sad rusty wreck of E-15 (in which poor Brodie had lost his life) flashed past ; the Turkish battleship *Messudieh*, still bottom uppermost, once sunk by Holbrook when he won his V.C. in B-11 ; Chanak Fort in ruins as Admiral de Robeck's critical March 18 (1915) had left them ; the Nagara boom that had been such a difficult job for our submarines—these were unforgettable reminders of past history.

Finally through the night Admiral Gough-Calthorpe's cavalcade advanced across the Marmara Sea, and next morning the minarets of Constantinople with St. Sophia's dome shone up in the sunlight. Dunbar-Nasmith's surprise visit when he shelled the city from his submarine ; Savory's sudden overhead arrival by night—these incidents had all taken on a new value. But one item yet remained to be discovered. Where was the cause of four years' trouble ? What had become of *Goeben*, the ship of many adventures, the battle-cruiser that neither shells nor mines, not even aerial bombs, could destroy ?

She had been to Sebastopol, docked, repaired and a few days ago got back to her old berth in Stenia Creek. This wonderful ship—perhaps more full of history than any other man-of-war afloat, with the exception of Nelson's *Victory*—deserves to be preserved for many a year for the lessons she suggests in overcoming great difficulties. Some day the time will come when she must be broken up, but not just immediately. Handed over to Turkey by the Lausanne Treaty, she was then given an extensive

overhaul that was not finished till March 1930. Despite the past, she next showed she could still do her 27 knots and keep it up for several hours.

*Yavuz* is the name by which the Turks now call her, but *Goeben* she will always be in the pages of sea history.

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